

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5331

To create a National Science Foundation scholarship-for-service Humanitarian Tech Corps, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 14, 2024

Mr. WELCH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To create a National Science Foundation scholarship-for-service Humanitarian Tech Corps, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Humanitarian Tech
5 Corps Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that the Federal Govern-
8 ment must broadly invest in the technological innovation
9 and talent pipeline of the United States, in a manner that
10 is beyond traditional focus areas, in order to—

- 1 (1) develop public interest technology expertise;
 2 and
 3 (2) ensure Federal agencies, especially agencies
 4 tasked with critical humanitarian missions, have the
 5 capacity to uniquely and meaningfully leverage lead-
 6 ing-edge technology to improve their operations.

7 **SEC. 3. FEDERAL HUMANITARIAN TECHNOLOGY SCHOLAR-**
 8 **SHIP-FOR-SERVICE PROGRAM.**

9 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
 11 trator” means the Administrator of the United
 12 States Agency for International Development.

13 (2) COVERED DEGREE.—The term “covered de-
 14 gree” means a baccalaureate or postgraduate degree
 15 that is in—

16 (A) computer science;

17 (B) data science or data analytics; or

18 (C) any other science, technology, engi-
 19 neering, or mathematics field that, as deter-
 20 mined by the Administrator under subsection
 21 (j)(1)(A) and shared with the Director for pro-
 22 gram facilitation, enables humanitarian oper-
 23 ations and technology-related modernization ef-
 24 forts.

(3) COVERED POSITION.—The term “covered position”, when used with respect to a scholarship recipient, means a position of employment (including a civil service or foreign service position with a qualifying agency)—

(A) for which the scholarship recipient is qualified;

(B) that—

(i) requires a covered degree; or

(ii) does not explicitly require a covered degree but, as determined by the Administrator under subsection (j)(1)(A)(ii) and shared with the Director for program facilitation, directly supports strictly humanitarian operations, such as an analysis, management, or executive position or another operational position that provides such direct support; and

(C) that is with a qualifying agency or a qualifying organization or nongovernmental agency.

(4) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means the Director of the National Science Foundation.

(5) ELIGIBLE STUDENT.—The term “eligible student” means an individual who—

1 (A) is a citizen of the United States; and

2 (B) is a full-time student enrolled in a pro-
3 gram of study leading to a covered degree at a
4 qualifying institution.

5 (6) HUMANITARIAN TECH CORPS SCHOLAR-
6 SHIP.—The term “Humanitarian Tech Corps schol-
7 arship” means a scholarship described in subsection
8 (c)(1).

9 (7) QUALIFYING AGENCY.—The term “quali-
10 fying agency” means—

11 (A) the United States Agency for Inter-
12 national Development; or

13 (B) another agency, as determined by the
14 Administrator under subsection (j)(1)(B) and
15 shared with the Director for program facilita-
16 tion.

17 (8) QUALIFYING INSTITUTION.—The term
18 “qualifying institution” means an institution of
19 higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the
20 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

21 (9) QUALIFYING ORGANIZATION OR NON-
22 GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY.—The term “qualifying or-
23 ganization or nongovernmental agency” means an
24 organization or nongovernmental agency identified

1 by the Administrator under subsection (j)(1)(C) and
2 shared with the Director for program facilitation.

3 (10) SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT.—The term
4 “scholarship recipient” means an eligible student
5 who receives a Humanitarian Tech Corps scholar-
6 ship and enters into an agreement under subsection
7 (e).

8 (b) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—The Director, in co-
9 ordination with the Director of the Office of Personnel
10 Management and the Administrator, shall establish a Fed-
11 eral humanitarian technology scholarship-for-service pro-
12 gram (referred to in this section as the “Humanitarian
13 Tech Corps Program”) to recruit and train the next gen-
14 eration of professionals needed to meet the humanitarian
15 technology needs of the Federal Government.

16 (c) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND COMPONENTS.—
17 The Humanitarian Tech Corps Program shall—

18 (1) award grants, contracts, or cooperative
19 agreements to qualifying institutions of higher edu-
20 cation to enable the qualifying institutions to provide
21 Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarships to eligible
22 students;

23 (2) in consultation with the United States
24 Agency for International Development, provide the
25 scholarship recipients with summer internship oppor-

tunities or other meaningful temporary appointments serving humanitarian purposes in qualifying agencies or qualifying organizations or nongovernmental agencies; and

(3) prioritize the placement of scholarship recipients fulfilling the post-award employment obligation under this section in covered positions in a manner that ensures—

(A) for not less than the first year of such post-award employment obligation required under subsection (e)(1)(A), all scholarship recipients are placed in a covered position with a qualifying agency; and

(B) that after the completion of the first year of such employment obligation, scholarship recipients may obtain employment in covered positions at a qualifying organization or nongovernmental agency.

(d) SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNTS; SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT SELECTION.—

(1) SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNTS.—Each Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarship shall be in an amount that covers the scholarship recipient's tuition and fees at the qualifying institution under subsection (c)(1) for not more than 4 years and provides the

1 scholarship recipient with an additional living sti-
2 pend.

3 (2) SELECTION.—In selecting eligible students
4 to receive Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarships, a
5 qualifying institution participating in the Humanitarian Tech Corps program shall not exclusively con-
6 sider the technical background or prior education of
7 the eligible students, but shall also take into consid-
8 eration other experiences of the eligible students
9 that may transfer well to humanitarian work.
10

11 (e) AGREEMENT.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of receiving a
13 Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarship, an eligible
14 student shall enter into an agreement with the quali-
15 fying institution providing the scholarship under
16 which the eligible student receiving the scholarship—

17 (A) agrees to work for a period equal to
18 the duration of the scholarship, following re-
19 ceipt of the student's degree, in a covered posi-
20 tion;

21 (B) accepts and acknowledges the condi-
22 tions of support under paragraph (2); and

23 (C) accepts the repayment requirements
24 under subsection (f) and all other terms and

1 conditions of the Humanitarian Tech Corps
2 scholarship.

3 (2) CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT.—

4 (A) PROVISION OF DOCUMENTATION AND
5 CONTACT INFORMATION.—As a condition of re-
6 ceiving a Humanitarian Tech Corps scholar-
7 ship, an eligible student shall agree to provide
8 the Office of Personnel Management (in coordi-
9 nation with the National Science Foundation)
10 and the qualifying institution with annual
11 verifiable documentation of post-award employ-
12 ment and up-to-date contact information.

13 (B) OTHER CONDITIONS.—A scholarship
14 recipient shall be liable to the United States as
15 provided under subsection (f) if the individual—

16 (i) fails to maintain an acceptable
17 level of academic standing, as determined
18 by the Director, at the applicable quali-
19 fying institution;

20 (ii) is dismissed from such qualifying
21 institution for disciplinary reasons;

22 (iii) withdraws from the covered de-
23 gree program before completing the pro-
24 gram;

1 (iv) declares that the individual does
 2 not intend to fulfill the post-award employ-
 3 ment obligation under this section;

4 (v) fails to maintain or fulfill any of
 5 the post-graduation or post-award obliga-
 6 tions or requirements of the individual; or

7 (vi) fails to fulfill the requirements of
 8 subparagraph (A).

9 (f) REPAYMENT.—

10 (1) AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT.—

11 (A) LESS THAN 1 YEAR OF SERVICE.—If a
 12 circumstance described in subsection (e)(2)(B)
 13 occurs before the completion of 1 year of a
 14 post-award employment obligation under this
 15 section, the total amount of scholarship awards
 16 received by the individual under this section
 17 shall—

18 (i) be repaid; or

19 (ii) be treated as a loan to be repaid
 20 in accordance with paragraph (3).

21 (B) 1 OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE.—If a
 22 circumstance described in clause (iv) or (v) of
 23 subsection (e)(2)(B) occurs after the completion
 24 of 1 or more years of a post-award employment
 25 obligation under this section, the total amount

of scholarship awards received by the individual under this section, reduced by the ratio of the number of years of service completed divided by the number of years of service required, shall—

(i) be repaid; or

(ii) be treated as a loan to be repaid in accordance with paragraph (3).

(2) COLLECTION OF REPAYMENT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In the event that a scholarship recipient is required to repay a Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarship award, the qualifying institution providing the scholarship shall—

(i) determine the repayment amount and notify the recipient, the Director, and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management of the amount owed; and

(ii) collect the repayment amount within a reasonable period of time, as determined by the Director, or treat the repayment amount as a loan in accordance with paragraph (3).

(B) RETURNED TO TREASURY.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), any repayment collected

1 under this paragraph shall be returned to
2 the Treasury of the United States.

3 (ii) RETAINED PERCENTAGE.—A
4 qualifying institution may retain a percent-
5 age of any repayment the institution col-
6 lects under this subsection to defray ad-
7 ministrative costs associated with the col-
8 lection. The Director shall establish a sin-
9 gle, fixed percentage that will apply to all
10 qualifying institutions of higher education
11 under this section.

12 (3) LOAN TREATMENT.—A loan described in
13 subparagraph (A)(ii) or (B)(ii) of paragraph (1)
14 shall—

15 (A) be treated as a Federal Direct Unsub-
16 sidized Stafford Loan under part D of title IV
17 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
18 U.S.C. 1087a et seq.); and

19 (B) be subject to repayment, together with
20 interest thereon accruing from the date of the
21 scholarship award, in accordance with terms
22 and conditions specified by the Director (in con-
23 sultation with the Secretary of Education) in
24 regulations promulgated to carry out this sub-
25 section.

1 (4) EXCEPTIONS.—The Director may provide
2 for the partial or total waiver or suspension of any
3 service or payment obligation by a scholarship recipi-
4 ent—

5 (A) whenever compliance by the scholar-
6 ship recipient with the obligation is impossible
7 or would involve extreme hardship to the schol-
8 arship recipient; or

9 (B) if enforcement of such obligation with
10 respect to the scholarship recipient would be
11 unconscionable.

12 (g) MONITORING COMPLIANCE.—As a condition of
13 participating in the program, a qualifying institution
14 shall—

15 (1) enter into an agreement with the Director
16 to monitor the compliance of scholarship recipients
17 with respect to their post-award employment obliga-
18 tions; and

19 (2) provide to the Director and the Director of
20 the Office of Personnel Management, on an annual
21 basis, the post-award employment documentation re-
22 quired under subsection (e)(2)(A) for scholarship re-
23 cipients supported by the qualifying institution, dur-
24 ing the period beginning upon the receipt of the Hu-
25 manitarian Tech Corps scholarship and ending upon

1 the completion of the scholarship recipient's post-
2 award employment obligations.

3 (h) HIRING AUTHORITY.—

4 (1) APPOINTMENT IN EXCEPTED SERVICE.—

5 Notwithstanding any provision of chapter 33 of title
6 5, United States Code, governing appointments in
7 the competitive service, a qualifying agency shall ap-
8 point in the excepted service an individual who has
9 completed the eligible degree program for which a
10 scholarship was awarded.

11 (2) NONCOMPETITIVE CONVERSION.—Except as

12 provided in paragraph (4), upon fulfillment of the
13 service term, an employee appointed under para-
14 graph (1) may be converted noncompetitively to
15 term, career-conditional, or career appointment.

16 (3) TIMING OF CONVERSION.—A qualifying

17 agency may noncompetitively convert a term em-
18 ployee appointed under paragraph (2) to a career-
19 conditional or career appointment before the term
20 appointment expires.

21 (4) AUTHORITY TO DECLINE CONVERSION.—A

22 qualifying agency may decline to make the non-
23 competitive conversion or appointment under para-
24 graph (2) for cause.

25 (i) PUBLIC INFORMATION.—

1 (1) EVALUATION.—The Director, in coordina-
2 tion with the Director of the Office of Personnel
3 Management, shall periodically evaluate and make
4 public, in a manner that protects the personally
5 identifiable information of scholarship recipients, in-
6 formation on the success of recruiting individuals for
7 scholarships under this section and on hiring and re-
8 taining those individuals in the humanitarian tech-
9 nology workforce, including information on—

10 (A) placement rates;

11 (B) where students are placed, including
12 job titles and descriptions;

13 (C) salary ranges for students not released
14 from obligations under this section;

15 (D) how long after graduation students are
16 placed;

17 (E) how long students stay in the positions
18 they enter upon graduation;

19 (F) how many students are released from
20 obligations; and

21 (G) what, if any, remedial training is re-
22 quired.

23 (2) REPORTS.—The Director, in coordination
24 with the Office of Personnel Management, shall sub-
25 mit, not less frequently than once every 2 years, to

1 the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Trans-
2 portation and the Committee on Homeland Security
3 and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the
4 Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and
5 the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of
6 the House of Representatives, a report that in-
7 cludes—

8 (A) the results of the evaluation under
9 paragraph (1);

10 (B) an explanation of any disparity in re-
11 porting between scholarship recipients and their
12 respective qualifying institutions; and

13 (C) any recent statistics regarding the size,
14 composition, and educational requirements of
15 the Federal humanitarian technology workforce.

16 (3) RESOURCES.—The Director, in coordination
17 with the Director of the Office of Personnel Manage-
18 ment, shall provide consolidated and user-friendly
19 online resources for prospective scholarship recipi-
20 ents, including, to the extent practicable—

21 (A) searchable, up-to-date, and accurate
22 information about participating qualifying insti-
23 tutions and job opportunities related to Hu-
24 manitarian Tech Corps scholarships; and

1 (B) a description of humanitarian careers
 2 for science, technology, mathematics, or engi-
 3 neering students.

4 (j) ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES.—

5 (1) USAID ADMINISTRATOR DUTIES.—

6 (A) DECISIONS REGARDING HUMANI-
 7 TARIAN OPERATIONS.—By not later than 180
 8 days after the date of enactment of this Act,
 9 the Administrator, after consultation with the
 10 Director, shall—

11 (i) define the concepts of “humani-
 12 tarian operations” and “technological mod-
 13 ernization efforts” for purposes of sub-
 14 section (a)(2)(C);

15 (ii) determine which positions directly
 16 support humanitarian operations for pur-
 17 poses of subsection (a)(3)(B)(ii); and

18 (iii) identify the covered degrees that
 19 the Administrator determines meet the re-
 20 quirements of subsection (a)(2)(C).

21 (B) IDENTIFICATION OF QUALIFYING
 22 AGENCIES.—

23 (i) IN GENERAL.—By not later than
 24 180 days after the date of enactment of
 25 this Act, the Administrator, after consulta-

1 tion with the Director, shall identify any
2 other agency, entity, office, or commission
3 that the Administrator determines is a
4 qualifying agency for purposes of sub-
5 section (a)(7)(B).

6 (ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The Adminis-
7 trator shall identify an agency, entity, of-
8 fice, or commission as a qualifying agency
9 if—

10 (I) the agency, entity, office or
11 commission is—

12 (aa) an Executive agency, as
13 defined in section 101 of title 5,
14 United States Code, with human-
15 itarian initiatives; or

16 (bb) an agency, entity, of-
17 fice, or commission with humani-
18 tarian initiatives that is estab-
19 lished in the legislative or judicial
20 branch of the Federal Govern-
21 ment; and

22 (II) the Administrator deter-
23 mines such identification is appro-
24 priate to meet the humanitarian oper-

1 ations needs of the Federal Govern-
2 ment.

3 (iii) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.—In
4 making the determination under clause
5 (ii)(II) with respect to an agency, entity,
6 office, or commission, the Administrator
7 shall give special consideration to the do-
8 mestic relief work carried out by the agen-
9 cy, entity, office, or commission.

10 (C) IDENTIFICATION OF QUALIFYING OR-
11 GANIZATIONS OR NONGOVERNMENTAL AGEN-
12 CIES.—

13 (i) IN GENERAL.—By not later than
14 180 days after the date of enactment of
15 this Act, the Administrator, after consulta-
16 tion with the Director, shall identify orga-
17 nizations and nonprofit agencies that qual-
18 ify to participate in the Humanitarian
19 Tech Corps program, in accordance with
20 subsection (a)(9) and based on the criteria
21 described in clause (ii).

22 (ii) REQUIREMENTS.—In order to be
23 qualified for purposes of clause (i), an or-
24 ganization or nonprofit agency shall—

1 (I) be a partner of the United
2 States Agency for International Devel-
3 opment;

4 (II) serve humanitarian objec-
5 tives; and

6 (III) meet any other require-
7 ments determined necessary by the
8 Administrator to achieve the purposes
9 of this section.

10 (D) PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE TO THE
11 DIRECTOR.—By not later than 180 days after
12 the date of enactment of this Act, the Adminis-
13 trator shall provide the Director with—

14 (i) the definitions described in sub-
15 paragraph (A)(i);

16 (ii) a list of the covered degrees in ac-
17 cordance with subparagraph (A)(iii);

18 (iii) a list of the qualifying agencies
19 identified under subparagraph (B); and

20 (iv) a list of the organizations and
21 nonprofit agencies identified as qualifying
22 organizations or nongovernmental agencies
23 under subparagraph (C).

24 (E) UPDATES.—On not less than an an-
25 nual basis, the Administrator shall—

1 (i) review the determinations made
 2 under subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C);

3 (ii) update any such determinations as
 4 needed; and

5 (iii) provide any such updated deter-
 6 minations, or updated definitions or lists
 7 described in subparagraph (D), to the Di-
 8 rector.

9 (F) ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.—In addi-
 10 tion to the assistance provided under subpara-
 11 graphs (A) through (E), the Administrator
 12 shall, upon request by the Director, assist the
 13 Director with respect to any other aspects of
 14 the Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarship pro-
 15 gram that relate to humanitarian operations, in
 16 order to enable the Director to be able to focus
 17 on technology talent pipeline development
 18 through the program.

19 (2) DIRECTOR DUTIES.—The Director shall an-
 20 nually consult with the Administrator—

21 (A) regarding the implementation of the
 22 Humanitarian Tech Corps scholarship program;
 23 and

24 (B) to review—

- 1 (i) the scholarship recipient selection
2 process for the preceding year; and
- 3 (ii) the ability of the United States
4 Agency for International Development to
5 provide recommendations regarding the
6 Humanitarian Tech Corps program to the
7 National Science Foundation for future se-
8 lection cycles.

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