

114TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 5169

To strengthen welfare research and evaluation, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 6, 2016

Mr. BUCHANAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To strengthen welfare research and evaluation, 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 “What Works to Move  
5 Welfare Recipients into Jobs Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 413 of the Social Security  
8 Act (42 U.S.C. 613) is amended to read as follows:

1 **“SEC. 413. EVALUATION OF TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR**  
2 **NEEDY FAMILIES AND RELATED PROGRAMS.**

3 “(a) EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF TANF.—The  
4 Secretary shall conduct research on the effect of State pro-  
5 grams funded under this part and any other State pro-  
6 gram funded with qualified State expenditures (as defined  
7 in section 409(a)(7)(B)(i)) on employment, self-suffi-  
8 ciency, child well-being, unmarried births, marriage, pov-  
9 erty, economic mobility, and other factors as determined  
10 by the Secretary.

11 “(b) EVALUATION OF GRANTS TO IMPROVE CHILD  
12 WELL-BEING BY PROMOTING HEALTHY MARRIAGE AND  
13 RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD.—The Secretary shall con-  
14 duct research to determine the effects of the grants made  
15 under section 403(a)(2) on child well-being, marriage,  
16 family stability, economic mobility, poverty, and other fac-  
17 tors as determined by the Secretary.

18 “(c) PARTNERSHIP WITH STATES TO IMPROVE PER-  
19 FORMANCE.—At the request of a State, the Secretary may  
20 provide assistance to help the State develop and evaluate  
21 policies to achieve the goals specified in section 401(a),  
22 including by providing funds for training and technical as-  
23 sistance.

24 “(d) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—The Sec-  
25 retary shall, in consultation with States receiving funds  
26 provided under this part, develop methods of dissemi-

1 nating information on any research, evaluation, or study  
2 conducted under this section, including facilitating the  
3 sharing of information and best practices among States  
4 and localities.

5 “(e) STATE-INITIATED EVALUATIONS.—A State shall  
6 be eligible to receive funding to evaluate the State pro-  
7 gram funded under this part or any other State program  
8 funded with qualified State expenditures (as defined in  
9 section 409(a)(7)(B)(i)) if—

10 “(1) the State submits to the Secretary a de-  
11 scription of the proposed evaluation;

12 “(2) the Secretary determines that the design  
13 and approach of the proposed evaluation is rigorous  
14 and is likely to yield information that is credible and  
15 will be useful to other States; and

16 “(3) unless waived by the Secretary, the State  
17 contributes to the cost of the evaluation, from non-  
18 Federal sources, an amount equal to at least 25 per-  
19 cent of the cost of the proposed evaluation.

20 “(f) CENSUS BUREAU RESEARCH.—

21 “(1) The Bureau of the Census shall implement  
22 or enhance household surveys of program participa-  
23 tion, in consultation with the Secretary and the  
24 Burueau of Labor Statistics and made available to  
25 interested parties, to allow for the assessment of the

1 outcomes of continued welfare reform on the eco-  
2 nomic and child well-being of low-income families  
3 with children, including those who received assist-  
4 ance or services from a State program funded under  
5 this part or any other State program funded with  
6 qualified State expenditures (as defined in section  
7 409(a)(7)(B)(i)). The content of the survey should  
8 include such information as may be necessary to ex-  
9 amine the issues of unmarried childbearing, mar-  
10 riage, welfare dependency and compliance with work  
11 requirements, the beginning and ending of spells of  
12 assistance, work, earnings and employment stability,  
13 and the well-being of children.

14 “(2) To carry out the activities specified in  
15 paragraph (1), the Bureau of the Census, the Sec-  
16 retary, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics shall con-  
17 sider ways to improve the surveys and data derived  
18 from the surveys to—

19 “(A) address underreporting of the receipt  
20 of means-tested benefits and tax benefits for  
21 low-income individuals and families;

22 “(B) increase understanding of poverty  
23 spells and long-term poverty, including by facili-  
24 tating the matching of information to better un-  
25 derstand intergenerational poverty;

1           “(C) generate a better geographical under-  
2           standing of poverty such as through State-  
3           based estimates and measures of neighborhood  
4           poverty;

5           “(D) increase understanding of the effects  
6           of means-tested benefits and tax benefits on the  
7           earnings of low-income families; and

8           “(E) improve how poverty and economic  
9           well-being are measured, including through the  
10          use of consumption measures.

11          “(g) RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONDUCTED  
12          UNDER THIS SECTION.—Research and evaluation con-  
13          ducted under this section designed to determine the effects  
14          of a program or policy (other than research conducted  
15          under subsection (f)) shall use experimental designs using  
16          random assignment or other reliable, evidence-based re-  
17          search methodologies that allow for the strongest possible  
18          causal inferences when random assignment is not feasible.

19          “(h) DEVELOPMENT OF WHAT WORKS CLEARING-  
20          HOUSE OF PROVEN AND PROMISING APPROACHES TO  
21          MOVE WELFARE RECIPIENTS INTO WORK.—

22                 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consulta-  
23                 tion with the Secretary of Labor, shall develop a  
24                 database (which shall be referred to as the ‘What  
25                 Works Clearinghouse of Proven and Promising

1 Projects to Move Welfare Recipients into Work’) of  
2 the projects that used a proven approach or a prom-  
3 ising approach in moving welfare recipients into  
4 work, based on independent, rigorous evaluations of  
5 the projects. The database shall include a separate  
6 listing of projects that used a developmental ap-  
7 proach in delivering services and a further separate  
8 listing of the projects with no or negative effects.  
9 The Secretary shall add to the What Works Clear-  
10 ighthouse of Proven and Promising Projects to Move  
11 Welfare Recipients into Work data about the  
12 projects that, based on an independent, well-con-  
13 ducted experimental evaluation of a program or  
14 project, using random assignment or other research  
15 methodologies that allow for the strongest possible  
16 causal inferences, have shown they are proven,  
17 promising, developmental, or ineffective approaches.

18 “(2) CRITERIA FOR EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVE-  
19 NESS OF APPROACH.—The Secretary, in consultation  
20 with the Secretary of Labor and organizations with  
21 experience in evaluating research on the effective-  
22 ness of various approaches in delivering services to  
23 move welfare recipients into work, shall—

24 “(A) establish criteria for evidence of effec-  
25 tiveness; and

1           “(B) ensure that the process for estab-  
2           lishing the criteria—

3                   “(i) is transparent;

4                   “(ii) is consistent across agencies;

5                   “(iii) provides opportunity for public  
6           comment; and

7                   “(iv) takes into account efforts of  
8           Federal agencies to identify and publicize  
9           effective interventions, including efforts at  
10          the Department of Health and Human  
11          Services, the Department of Education,  
12          and the Department of Justice.

13          “(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

14                   “(A) APPROACH.—The term ‘approach’  
15          means a process, product, strategy, or practice  
16          that is—

17                   “(i) research-based, based on the re-  
18          sults of 1 or more empirical studies, and  
19          linked to program-determined outcomes;  
20          and

21                   “(ii) evaluated using rigorous research  
22          designs.

23                   “(B) PROVEN APPROACH.—The term  
24          ‘proven approach’ means an approach that—

1 “(i) meets the requirements of a  
2 promising approach; and

3 “(ii) has demonstrated significant  
4 positive outcomes at more than 1 site in  
5 terms of increasing work and earnings of  
6 participants, reducing poverty and depend-  
7 ence, or strengthening families.

8 “(C) PROMISING APPROACH.—The term  
9 ‘promising approach’ means an approach—

10 “(i) that meets the requirements of  
11 subparagraph (D)(i);

12 “(ii) that has been evaluated using  
13 well-designed and rigorous randomized  
14 controlled or quasi-experimental research  
15 designs;

16 “(iii) that has demonstrated signifi-  
17 cant positive outcomes at only 1 site in  
18 terms of increasing work and earnings of  
19 participants, reducing poverty and depend-  
20 ence, or strengthening families; and

21 “(iv) under which the benefits of the  
22 positive outcomes have exceeded the costs  
23 of achieving the outcomes.



1           “(D) DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH.—The  
2           term ‘developmental approach’ means an ap-  
3           proach that—

4                   “(i) is research-based, grounded in  
5                   relevant empirically based knowledge, and  
6                   linked to program-determined outcomes;

7                   “(ii) is evaluated using rigorous re-  
8                   search designs; and

9                   “(iii) has yet to demonstrate a signifi-  
10                  cant positive outcome in terms of increas-  
11                  ing work and earnings of participants in a  
12                  cost-effective way.

13          “(i) APPROPRIATION.—

14                  “(1) IN GENERAL.—Of the amount appro-  
15                  priated by section 403(a)(1) for each fiscal year,  
16                  0.33 percent shall be available for research and eval-  
17                  uation under this section.

18                  “(2) ALLOCATION.—Of the amount made avail-  
19                  able under paragraph (1) for each fiscal year, the  
20                  Secretary shall make available \$10,000,000 plus  
21                  such additional amount as the Secretary deems nec-  
22                  essary and appropriate, to carry out subsection (f).”.

23          (b)           CONFORMING           AMENDMENT.—Section  
24          403(a)(1)(B) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 603(a)(1)(B)) is  
25          amended by inserting “, reduced by the percentage speci-

1 fied in section 413(i) with respect to the fiscal year,” be-  
2 fore “as the amount”.

3 **SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

4       The amendments made by this Act shall take effect  
5 on October 1, 2016.

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