

  
(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a consistent set of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to address financial instability of graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers, and for other purposes.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MCCLELLAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the  
Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**A BILL**

To require the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a consistent set of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to address financial instability of graduate researchers and postdoctoral researchers, 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 “Relieving Economic  
5 Strain to Enhance American Resilience and Competitive-

1 ness in Higher Education and Research Act” or the “RE-  
2 SEARCHER Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. POLICY GUIDELINES FOR FEDERAL RESEARCH**  
4 **AGENCIES TO ADDRESS FINANCIAL INSTA-**  
5 **BILITY OF GRADUATE RESEARCHERS AND**  
6 **POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.**

7 (a) DEFINITION.—In this section:

8 (1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The  
9 term “institution of higher education” has the  
10 meaning given such term in section 101 of the High-  
11 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

12 (2) GRADUATE RESEARCHERS.—The term  
13 “graduate researchers” means individuals enrolled in  
14 a degree program leading to an advanced degree who  
15 receive stipends or other compensation to conduct  
16 research in any discipline at an institution of higher  
17 education that is a recipient of Federal funding.

18 (3) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The term  
19 “postdoctoral researchers” means individuals in  
20 training-focused positions who have received a doc-  
21 toral degree or equivalent and receive stipends or  
22 other compensation to conduct research in any dis-  
23 cipline at an institution of higher education that is  
24 a recipient of Federal funding.

25 (b) OSTP GUIDELINES.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than six months  
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Di-  
3 rector of the Office of Science and Technology Pol-  
4 icy, in consultation with the National Science and  
5 Technology Council, the Committee on STEM Edu-  
6 cation, PCAST, institutions of higher education,  
7 graduate and postdoctoral organizations, and other  
8 relevant stakeholders, shall develop a consistent set  
9 of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to  
10 address financial instability of graduate researchers  
11 and postdoctoral researchers.

12           (2) REQUIREMENTS.—In developing the policy  
13 guidelines under paragraph (1), the Director of the  
14 Office of Science and Technology Policy shall include  
15 guidelines that address, to the extent practicable, the  
16 following:

17           (A) Opportunities to increase stipends for  
18 graduate researchers and postdoctoral research-  
19 ers, including indexing based on location and  
20 accounting for cost of living adjustments.

21           (B) Opportunities to increase access to  
22 quality, affordable medical, dental, and vision  
23 care.

24           (C) Opportunities to increase access to af-  
25 fordable housing and transportation.

1 (D) Opportunities to reduce food insecu-  
2 rity.

3 (E) Opportunities to address costs of car-  
4 ing for family members, including child care.

5 (3) APPLICATION.—

6 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Of-  
7 fice of Science and Technology Policy shall en-  
8 courage and monitor efforts of Federal research  
9 agencies to develop and implement policies  
10 based on the policy guidelines under paragraph  
11 (1).

12 (B) FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCY IMPLE-  
13 MENTATION.—Not later than six months after  
14 receiving the policy guidelines under paragraph  
15 (1), the head of each Federal research agency  
16 shall—

17 (i) develop and implement policies  
18 with respect to financial instability of grad-  
19 uate researchers and postdoctoral research-  
20 ers that are consistent with such policy  
21 guidelines; and

22 (ii) broadly disseminate such policies  
23 to current and potential recipients of re-  
24 search and development awards made by  
25 such agency.

1           (4) UPDATES.—The Director of the Office of  
2           Science and Technology Policy shall update the pol-  
3           icy guidelines under paragraph (1) as the Director  
4           determines necessary.

5           (5) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the  
6           date after the guidelines are submitted and every  
7           five years thereafter, the Director of the Office of  
8           Science and Technology Policy shall submit to the  
9           Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, the  
10          Committee on Education and Workforce, and the  
11          Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House  
12          of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce,  
13          Science, and Transportation and the Committee on  
14          Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Sen-  
15          ate a report containing information relating to the  
16          following:

17                   (A) The policy guidelines under paragraph  
18                   (1).

19                   (B) Progress on the implementation of  
20                   such guidelines by Federal research agencies.

21          (c) DATA COLLECTION.—The Research and Develop-  
22          ment, Competition, and Innovation Act (enacted as divi-  
23          sion B of Public Law 117–167) is amended—

24                   (1) in section 10314(b) (42 U.S.C. 18994)—

25                           (A) in paragraph (2)—

1 (i) in subparagraph (D), by striking  
2 “and” after the semicolon;

3 (ii) by redesignating subparagraph  
4 (E) as subparagraph (F); and

5 (iii) by inserting after subparagraph  
6 (D) the following new subparagraph:

7 “(E) graduate researcher and postdoctoral  
8 researcher stipend amounts and financial insta-  
9 bility (disaggregated, to the extent practicable,  
10 by demographics); and”;

11 (B) by adding at the end the following new  
12 paragraph:

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

14 “(A) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-  
15 CATION.—The term ‘institution of higher edu-  
16 cation’ has the meaning given such term in sec-  
17 tion 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
18 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

19 “(B) GRADUATE RESEARCHERS.—The  
20 term ‘graduate researchers’ means individuals  
21 enrolled in a degree program leading to an ad-  
22 vanced degree who receive stipends or other  
23 compensation to conduct research in any dis-  
24 cipline at an institution of higher education  
25 that is a recipient of Federal funding.

1           “(C) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The  
2           term ‘postdoctoral researchers’ means individ-  
3           uals in training-focused positions who have re-  
4           ceived a doctoral degree or equivalent and re-  
5           ceive stipends or other compensation to conduct  
6           research in any discipline at an institution of  
7           higher education that is a recipient of Federal  
8           funding.”; and

9           (2) in paragraph (1) of section 10502(a) (42  
10          U.S.C. 19152(a)), by inserting “graduate and  
11          postdoctoral research stipend amounts  
12          (disaggregated, to the extent practicable, by demo-  
13          graphics),” before “and awarded budget”.

14          (d) DATA ON FINANCIAL INSTABILITY OF GRADUATE  
15          RESEARCHERS AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—

16          The Director of the National Science Foundation shall  
17          make awards, on a competitive basis, to institutions of  
18          higher education or nonprofit organizations (or consortia  
19          of such institutions or organizations) to collect and ana-  
20          lyze data on financial instability of graduate researchers  
21          and postdoctoral researchers (disaggregated, to the extent  
22          practicable, by demographics).

23          (e) NATIONAL ACADEMIES ASSESSMENT.—

24                 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years  
25          after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Di-

1 rector of the National Science Foundation shall  
2 enter into an agreement with the National Acad-  
3 emies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to un-  
4 dertake a study and issue a report on the status of  
5 financial instability of graduate researchers and  
6 postdoctoral researchers. To the extent feasible, the  
7 study shall include an assessment (disaggregated, to  
8 the extent practicable, by demographics) at a min-  
9 imum of the immediately preceding five years of the  
10 following:

11 (A) Stipends relative to average local med-  
12 ical, dental, and vision expenses.

13 (B) Stipends relative to average local hous-  
14 ing and transportation costs.

15 (C) Stipends relative to average local food  
16 costs.

17 (D) Stipends relative to average local costs  
18 of caring for family members, including child  
19 care costs.

20 (2) REPORT.—Not later than two years after  
21 the date on which the agreement between the Direc-  
22 tor of the National Science Foundation and the Na-  
23 tional Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Med-  
24 icine is entered into pursuant to paragraph (1), the  
25 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and

1 Medicine shall submit to Committee on Science,  
2 Space, and Technology, the Committee on Education  
3 and Workforce, and the Committee on Energy and  
4 Commerce of the House of Representatives and the  
5 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-  
6 tation and the Committee on Health, Education,  
7 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report con-  
8 taining the results of the assessment under such  
9 paragraph and recommendations relating thereto re-  
10 garding how Federal agencies, Congress, institutions  
11 of higher education, and other relevant entities may  
12 address financial instability of graduate researchers  
13 and postdoctoral researchers.

14 (f) GAO STUDY.—Not later than three years after  
15 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller  
16 General of the United States shall submit to the Com-  
17 mittee on Science, Space, and Technology, the Committee  
18 on Education and Workforce, and the Committee on En-  
19 ergy and Commerce of the House of Representatives and  
20 the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
21 and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and  
22 Pensions of the Senate a report that—

23 (1) assesses the degree to which Federal re-  
24 search agencies have implemented the policy guide-

1 lines under subsection (b) and the effectiveness of  
2 such implementation;

3 (2) includes recommendations on potential  
4 changes to practices and policies to improve such  
5 guidelines and such implementation; and

6 (3) includes recommendations on additional  
7 data collection and research needed to monitor  
8 progress on reducing financial instability of graduate  
9 researchers and postdoctoral researchers.