

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3054

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.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 29, 2025

Ms. McCLELLAN (for herself, Ms. DELBENE, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. TONKO, Ms. NORTON, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Mr. FROST, and Mr. FOSTER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

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-

ness in Higher Education and Research Act” or the “RESEARCHER Act”.

SEC. 2. POLICY GUIDELINES FOR FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCIES TO ADDRESS FINANCIAL INSTABILITY OF GRADUATE RESEARCHERS AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.

(a) DEFINITION.—In this section:

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

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

(3) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The term “postdoctoral researchers” means individuals in training-focused positions who have received a doctoral degree or equivalent and receive stipends or other compensation to conduct research in any discipline at an institution of higher education that is a recipient of Federal funding.

(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.

20 (B) Increasing stipends for postdoctoral
21 researchers conducting research in rural or un-
22 derserved areas, or in States eligible to receive
23 funding from the Established Program to Stim-
24 ulate Competitive Research under section 113
25 of the National Science Foundation Authoriza-

tion Act of 1988 (42 U.S.C. 1862g), to support the recruitment and retention of researchers in such regions.

(C) Opportunities to increase access to quality, affordable medical, dental, and vision care.

(D) Opportunities to increase access to affordable housing and transportation.

(E) Opportunities to reduce food insecurity.

(F) Opportunities to address costs of caring for family members, including child care.

(3) APPLICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall encourage and monitor efforts of Federal research agencies to develop and implement policies based on the policy guidelines under paragraph (1).

(B) FEDERAL RESEARCH AGENCY IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than six months after receiving the policy guidelines under paragraph (1), the head of each Federal research agency shall—

1 (i) develop and implement policies
2 with respect to financial instability of grad-
3 uate researchers and postdoctoral research-
4 ers that are consistent with such policy
5 guidelines; and

6 (ii) broadly disseminate such policies
7 to current and potential recipients of re-
8 search and development awards made by
9 such agency.

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

14 (5) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
15 date after the policy guidelines under paragraph (1)
16 are developed and every five years thereafter, the Di-
17 rector of the Office of Science and Technology Policy
18 shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space,
19 and Technology, the Committee on Education and
20 the Workforce, and the Committee on Energy and
21 Commerce of the House of Representatives and the
22 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-
23 tation and the Committee on Health, Education,
24 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report con-
25 taining information relating to the following:

1 (A) Such policy guidelines.

2 (B) Progress on the implementation of
3 such guidelines by Federal research agencies.

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

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

8 (A) in paragraph (2)—

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

11 (ii) by redesignating subparagraph
12 (E) as subparagraph (F); and

13 (iii) by inserting after subparagraph
14 (D) the following new subparagraph:

15 “(E) graduate researcher and postdoctoral
16 researcher stipend amounts and financial insta-
17 bility (disaggregated, to the extent practicable,
18 by demographics); and”;

19 (B) by adding at the end the following new
20 paragraph:

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

22 “(A) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-
23 CATION.—The term ‘institution of higher edu-
24 cation’ has the meaning given such term in sec-

1 tion 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965
2 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

3 “(B) GRADUATE RESEARCHERS.—The
4 term ‘graduate researchers’ means individuals
5 enrolled in a degree program leading to an ad-
6 vanced degree who receive stipends or other
7 compensation to conduct research in any dis-
8 cipline at an institution of higher education
9 that is a recipient of Federal funding.

10 “(C) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—The
11 term ‘postdoctoral researchers’ means individ-
12 uals in training-focused positions who have re-
13 ceived a doctoral degree or equivalent and re-
14 ceive stipends or other compensation to conduct
15 research in any discipline at an institution of
16 higher education that is a recipient of Federal
17 funding.”; and

18 (2) in paragraph (1) of section 10502(a) (42
19 U.S.C. 19152(a)), by inserting “graduate and
20 postdoctoral research stipend amounts
21 (disaggregated, to the extent practicable, by demo-
22 graphics),” before “and awarded budget”.

23 (d) DATA ON FINANCIAL INSTABILITY OF GRADUATE
24 RESEARCHERS AND POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS.—
25 The Director of the National Science Foundation shall

1 make awards, on a competitive basis, to institutions of
2 higher education or nonprofit organizations (or consortia
3 of such institutions or organizations) to collect and ana-
4 lyze data on financial instability of graduate researchers
5 and postdoctoral researchers (disaggregated, to the extent
6 practicable, by demographics).

7 (e) NATIONAL ACADEMIES ASSESSMENT.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Di-
10 rector of the National Science Foundation shall
11 enter into an agreement with the National Acad-
12 emies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to un-
13 dertake a study and issue a report on the status of
14 financial instability of graduate researchers and
15 postdoctoral researchers. To the extent feasible, the
16 study shall include an assessment (disaggregated, to
17 the extent practicable, by demographics) at a min-
18 imum of the immediately preceding five years of the
19 following:

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

22 (B) Stipends relative to average local hous-
23 ing and transportation costs.

24 (C) Stipends relative to average local food
25 costs.

1 (D) Stipends relative to average local costs
2 of caring for family members, including child
3 care costs.

4 (2) REPORT.—Not later than two years after
5 the date on which the agreement between the Direc-
6 tor of the National Science Foundation and the Na-
7 tional Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Med-
8 icine is entered into pursuant to paragraph (1), the
9 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and
10 Medicine shall submit to Committee on Science,
11 Space, and Technology, the Committee on Education
12 and the Workforce, and the Committee on Energy
13 and Commerce of the House of Representatives and
14 the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Trans-
15 portation and the Committee on Health, Education,
16 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report con-
17 taining the results of the assessment under such
18 paragraph and recommendations relating thereto re-
19 garding how Federal agencies, Congress, institutions
20 of higher education, and other relevant entities may
21 address financial instability of graduate researchers
22 and postdoctoral researchers.

23 (f) GAO STUDY.—Not later than three years after
24 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller
25 General of the United States shall submit to the Com-

1 mittee on Science, Space, and Technology, the Committee
2 on Education and the Workforce, and the Committee on
3 Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives
4 and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-
5 tation and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
6 and Pensions of the Senate a report that—

7 (1) assesses the degree to which Federal re-
8 search agencies have implemented the policy guide-
9 lines under subsection (b) and the effectiveness of
10 such implementation;

11 (2) includes recommendations on potential
12 changes to practices and policies to improve such
13 guidelines and such implementation; and

14 (3) includes recommendations on additional
15 data collection and research needed to monitor
16 progress on reducing financial instability of graduate
17 researchers and postdoctoral researchers.

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