

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To amend Public Law 91–378 to authorize activities relating to Civilian Conservation Centers, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. DAINES) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend Public Law 91–378 to authorize activities relating to Civilian Conservation Centers, 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 “Civilian Conservation
5 Center Enhancement Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CENTERS.**

7 Public Law 91–378 (16 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) is
8 amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“TITLE III—CIVILIAN**
2 **CONSERVATION CENTERS**

3 **“SEC. 301. DEFINITIONS.**

4 “In this title:

5 “(1) CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CENTER.—The
6 term ‘Civilian Conservation Center’ means any resi-
7 dential workforce development or training facility for
8 underserved youth operated by the Department of
9 the Interior or the Department of Agriculture.

10 “(2) COVERED GRADUATE.—The term ‘covered
11 graduate’ means an individual who successfully com-
12 pleted a training program at a Civilian Conservation
13 Center.

14 “(3) COVERED STUDENT.—The term ‘covered
15 student’ means an individual who is enrolled in a
16 training program at a Civilian Conservation Center.

17 “(4) SECRETARIES.—The term ‘Secretaries’
18 means—

19 “(A) the Secretary of Agriculture; and

20 “(B) the Secretary of the Interior.

21 **“SEC. 302. CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CENTERS WILDFIRE**
22 **AND CONSERVATION TRAINING PROGRAM.**

23 “(a) SPECIALIZED TRAINING PROGRAMS.—The Sec-
24 retaries, in coordination with the Secretary of Labor, shall

1 offer at Civilian Conservation Centers specialized training
2 programs focused on—

3 “(1) forestry and rangeland management;

4 “(2) wildland firefighting; or

5 “(3) any other topic relating to the mission of
6 the Forest Service or the Department of the Interior
7 or the public interest.

8 “(b) **PRIORITIZATION.**—The Secretaries shall
9 prioritize offering specialized training programs under
10 subsection (a) at facilities described in section 147(d) of
11 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
12 3197(d)).

13 **“SEC. 303. WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING WORKFORCE DEVEL-**
14 **OPMENT PILOT.**

15 “(a) **IN GENERAL.**—

16 “(1) **EXPERIMENT, RESEARCH, OR DEMONSTRATION PILOTS.**—The Secretary of Agriculture, in co-
17 ordination with the Secretary of Labor, may carry
18 out experimental, research, or demonstration pilots
19 to provide career and technical education curricula
20 and course offerings to advance the missions of the
21 Department of Agriculture at Civilian Conservation
22 Centers operated by the Department of Agriculture,
23 including facilities described in section 147(d) of the
24

1 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
2 U.S.C. 3197(d)).

3 “(2) CURRICULA AND COURSES.—Curricula and
4 courses described in paragraph (1) include—

5 “(A) incident management and emergency
6 response logistics;

7 “(B) disaster response;

8 “(C) forest products measurement;

9 “(D) timber sale administration and prepa-
10 ration;

11 “(E) heavy equipment operation;

12 “(F) equipment and mechanical services;

13 “(G) industrial electrical;

14 “(H) machining;

15 “(I) mill operations;

16 “(J) forest restoration;

17 “(K) habitat and water quality monitoring;

18 “(L) watershed and habitat enhancement;

19 “(M) range management;

20 “(N) recreation access improvement;

21 “(O) volunteers and visitors enhancement;

22 and

23 “(P) historic preservation.

24 “(b) REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out subsection

25 (a), the Secretary of Agriculture shall—

1 “(1) identify workforce needs in public land
2 agencies, forest, conservation, and recreation indus-
3 tries, and rural communities, after consulting with
4 State governments and agencies, Federal emergency
5 management and public land agencies, local commu-
6 nities, institutions of higher education, and Indian
7 Tribes;

8 “(2) develop marketing, recruitment, and reten-
9 tion materials for the curricula and courses offerings
10 provided under subsection (a); and

11 “(3) provide specialized staff necessary to teach
12 curricula and courses offerings provided under sub-
13 section (a), to the extent practicable.

14 **“SEC. 304. WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING WORKFORCE EN-**
15 **HANCEMENT.**

16 “(a) RECRUITMENT GOALS AND INVESTMENTS.—

17 “(1) RECRUITMENT GOAL.—The Secretaries—

18 “(A) shall each set goals of—

19 “(i) hiring 300 covered graduates an-
20 nually to contribute to wildland firefighting
21 or other critical workforce needs within the
22 respective Department of each of the Sec-
23 retaries;

24 “(ii) a certain percentage of covered
25 graduates **【annually】** attaining employ-

1 ment within the wildland firefighting, nat-
2 ural resources, forestry, or a related field;
3 and

4 “(iii) a certain percentage of covered
5 graduates **【annually】** attaining employ-
6 ment; and

7 “(B) may make investments to support the
8 recruitment, training, hiring, and retention of
9 covered graduates.

10 “(2) SIGNING BONUS.—The Secretaries may
11 provide for a signing bonus to enable the successful
12 employment and transition of covered graduates, in-
13 cluding for the purpose of securing housing in rural
14 and remote communities.

15 “(b) DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY.—For fiscal year
16 2023 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretaries may
17 appoint, without regard to the provisions of subchapter I
18 of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, other than
19 sections 3303 and 3328 of that title, a covered graduate
20 directly to a position for which the covered graduate meets
21 Office of Personnel Management qualification standards.

22 “(c) PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT.—The Secretaries
23 shall ensure that appropriate career pathways are devel-
24 oped for covered graduates of relevant Civilian Conserva-
25 tion Center training programs.

1 “(d) DISADVANTAGED YOUTH EMPLOYMENT.—Not-
2 withstanding any other provision of law, the Secretaries
3 may employ covered students at regular rates of pay for
4 necessary hours of work.

5 “(e) USE OF COVERED STUDENTS FOR CONTRACTS,
6 AGREEMENTS, AND GRANTS.—To the maximum extent
7 practicable, the Secretary of Agriculture shall encourage
8 the use of covered students to fulfill obligations under con-
9 tracts, agreements, and grants relevant to the training ad-
10 ministered by the Forest Service at a unit of the National
11 Forest System where a Civilian Conservation Center is lo-
12 cated.

13 **“SEC. 305. WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING HOUSING PILOT PRO-**
14 **GRAM.**

15 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries shall establish
16 a pilot program to employ covered students to improve and
17 expand the housing stock owned by the Federal Govern-
18 ment for the purpose of housing wildland firefighters, vol-
19 unteers, partner crewmembers, interns, and other agency
20 employees.

21 “(b) REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out the pilot pro-
22 gram under subsection (a), the Secretaries shall—

23 “(1) identify properties currently owned by the
24 Federal Government that would be appropriate

1 housing for wildland firefighters, volunteers, partner
2 crewmembers, interns, and other agency employees;

3 “(2) identify areas where the construction of
4 new housing described in paragraph (1) would be
5 appropriate and sustainable; and

6 “(3) submit to Congress a prioritized list of
7 projects for renovation with a plan for how the Sec-
8 retaries will employ covered students to repair, ren-
9 ovate, and remediate the properties identified under
10 paragraph (1).

11 **“SEC. 306. REPORT.**

12 “Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment
13 of this title, the Secretaries shall submit to the Committee
14 on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and
15 the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representa-
16 tives a report—

17 “(1) describing underutilized capacity at Civil-
18 ian Conservation Centers, based on an assessment
19 conducted by the Secretaries; and

20 “(2) identifying the investments, improvements,
21 and efficiencies necessary to utilize the full capacity
22 of Civilian Conservation Centers.”.