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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To authorize grants to fire departments to conduct activities with the goals of reducing falls among older adults and reducing response time when responding to in-home emergencies, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To authorize grants to fire departments to conduct activities with the goals of reducing falls among older adults and reducing response time when responding to in-home emergencies, 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 “Firefighters Assisting
5 Seniors To Emergency Response Act” or the “FASTER
6 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) According to the Centers for Disease Con-
4 trol and Prevention (CDC), about 14,000,000 falls
5 are reported each year nationwide among adults age
6 65 and over.

7 (2) These falls result in 38,000 deaths.

8 (3) Each year, approximately 3,000,000 older
9 adults are treated in emergency departments for a
10 fall injury.

11 (4) Falls are the top cause of injury and injury-
12 related deaths for adults over 65.

13 (5) Falls among adults aged 65 and above re-
14 sult in over \$80,000,000,000 per year in medical ex-
15 penses.

16 (6) More than 95 percent of hip fractures are
17 caused by falling.

18 (7) Falls are the most common cause of trau-
19 matic brain injuries.

20 (8) According to the National Institutes of
21 Health (NIH), over 70 percent of falls occur in the
22 home.

23 (9) Falls can often be prevented, including by
24 implementing simple home modifications.

25 (10) Fire department personnel can play an im-
26 portant role in preventing and responding to falls.

1 **SEC. 3. FIREFIGHTERS ASSISTING SENIORS TO EMER-**
2 **GENCY RESPONSE.**

3 (a) FALL PREVENTION AND HOME SAFETY
4 GRANTS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of
6 FEMA shall make grants directly to career fire de-
7 partments, combination fire departments, and volun-
8 teer fire departments for the purpose of imple-
9 menting programs to improve home safety and pre-
10 vent falls for older adults, including through fall pre-
11 vention programs.

12 (2) PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE.—Grants made
13 under this subsection shall be for three years.

14 (3) CONSIDERATION.—In awarding grants
15 under this subsection, the Administrator of FEMA
16 may give preferential consideration to applications
17 that involve non-Federal contributions that exceed
18 the difference between 100 percent and the max-
19 imum percentage allowable Federal contribution
20 specified in paragraph (5) for a year.

21 (4) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Adminis-
22 trator of FEMA may provide technical assistance to
23 States, units of local government, Tribal govern-
24 ments, and other public entities in furtherance of
25 the purposes of this section.

1 (5) LIMITATION ON COSTS.—The portion of the
2 costs of implementing programs to improve home
3 safety and prevent falls for older adults provided by
4 a grant under this paragraph may not exceed the
5 following:

6 (A) Seventy-five percent in the first year of
7 such grant.

8 (B) Seventy-five percent in the second year
9 of such grant.

10 (C) Thirty-five percent in the third year of
11 such grant.

12 (6) ADMINISTRATION.—Grants made pursuant
13 to this subsection shall be awarded on a competitive
14 basis through a neutral peer review process.

15 (b) APPLICATIONS.—

16 (1) RESTRICTION.—No grant may be made
17 under this section unless an application has been
18 submitted to, and approved by, the Administrator of
19 FEMA.

20 (2) FORM.—An application for a grant under
21 this section shall be submitted to the Administrator
22 of FEMA in such form, and containing such infor-
23 mation, as the Administrator of FEMA may pre-
24 scribe.

1 (3) CONTENTS.—At a minimum, each applica-
2 tion for a grant under this section shall—

3 (A) explain the applicant’s inability or
4 challenges to implement without Federal assist-
5 ance a program to improve home safety and
6 prevent falls for older adults; and

7 (B) specify long-term plans for continuing
8 such a program following the conclusion of Fed-
9 eral support provided under this section.

10 (c) ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS.—Grants under this
11 section shall be used for any of the following purposes:

12 (1) Procurement and installation of devices, in-
13 cluding lock boxes, that can be installed on homes
14 in order to allow emergency responders quicker ac-
15 cess to a home in case of an emergency.

16 (2) Recruitment, retention, salaries, and bene-
17 fits of community paramedicine personnel, including
18 firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, social workers, case
19 managers, administrators, or other professionals for
20 the purpose described in subsection (a)(1).

21 (3) Installation and replacement of smoke de-
22 tectors and batteries.

23 (4) Compilation of health information to permit
24 emergency responders ready access to vital health
25 data in case of an emergency.

1 (5) Minor home modifications to reduce fall
2 risks, including the following:

3 (A) Flattening of rugs.

4 (B) Removal of tripping hazards.

5 (C) Installation of hand rails and grab
6 bars, including supplies, labor, and insurance.

7 (6) Risk assessment and reconciliation of medi-
8 cations.

9 (7) Referral to classes, medical professionals,
10 and other community resources that educate seniors
11 on reducing fall risks.

12 (d) RULES REGARDING USE OF FUNDS.—

13 (1) LIMITATION.—Funds made available under
14 this section to fire departments may not be used to
15 supplant State or local funds, or, in the case of
16 Tribal governments, funds supplied by the Bureau of
17 Indian Affairs, but shall be used to increase the
18 amount of funds that would, in the absence of Fed-
19 eral funds received under this section, be made avail-
20 able from State or local sources, or in the case of
21 Tribal governments, from funds supplied by the Bu-
22 reau of Indian Affairs.

23 (2) RELATING TO PRIOR REDUCTIONS.—No
24 grant shall be awarded pursuant to this section to
25 a municipality or other recipient whose annual budg-

1 et at the time of the application for fire-related pro-
2 grams and emergency response has been reduced
3 below 80 percent of the average funding level in the
4 three years immediately preceding the date of the
5 application for the grant.

6 (3) PERMITTED.—Funds appropriated by Con-
7 gress for the activities of any agency of a Tribal gov-
8 ernment or the Bureau of Indian Affairs may be
9 used to provide the non-Federal share of the cost of
10 programs or projects funded under this section.

11 (e) WAIVERS.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—In a case of demonstrated
13 economic hardship of an applicant for a grant under
14 this section, the Administrator of FEMA may—

15 (A) waive the requirements of subsection

16 (d)(1); or

17 (B) waive or reduce the application of sub-
18 section (a)(5) or (d)(2).

19 (2) GUIDELINES.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of
21 FEMA shall establish and publish guidelines for
22 determining what constitutes economic hardship
23 for purposes of paragraph (1).

24 (B) CONSULTATION.—In developing guide-
25 lines under subparagraph (A), the Adminis-

1 trator of FEMA shall consult with individuals
2 who are—

3 (i) recognized for expertise in emer-
4 gency medical services provided by fire
5 services, community paramedicine, fall pre-
6 vention, or the economic affairs of State or
7 local governments; and

8 (ii) members of national fire service
9 organizations or national organizations
10 representing the interests of State or local
11 governments.

12 (C) CONSIDERATIONS.—In developing
13 guidelines under subparagraph (A), the Admin-
14 istrator of FEMA shall consider, with respect to
15 relevant communities, the following:

16 (i) Changes in rates of unemployment
17 from previous years.

18 (ii) Whether the rates of unemploy-
19 ment of the relevant communities are cur-
20 rently and have consistently exceeded the
21 annual national average rates of unemploy-
22 ment.

23 (iii) Changes in percentages of indi-
24 viduals eligible to receive food stamps from
25 previous years.

1 (iv) Such other factors as the Admin-
2 istrator of FEMA considers appropriate.

3 (f) PERFORMANCE EVALUATION.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of
5 FEMA shall establish a performance assessment sys-
6 tem, including quantifiable performance metrics, to
7 evaluate the extent to which grants awarded under
8 this section are furthering the purposes of this sec-
9 tion.

10 (2) SUBMITTAL OF INFORMATION.—The Ad-
11 ministrator of FEMA may require a grant recipient
12 to submit to the Administrator of FEMA any infor-
13 mation the Administrator of FEMA considers rea-
14 sonably necessary to evaluate the implementation of
15 programs to improve home safety and prevent falls
16 for older adults.

17 (g) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date
18 of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of FEMA
19 shall submit to Congress a report on the experience with,
20 and effectiveness of, grants awarded under this section in
21 meeting the objectives of this section. Such report may
22 include any recommendations the Administrator of FEMA
23 may have for amendments to this section and related pro-
24 visions of law.

1 (h) REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION OF FUNDING.—If
2 the Administrator of FEMA determines that a grant re-
3 cipient under this section is not in substantial compliance
4 with the terms and requirements of an approved grant ap-
5 plication submitted under this section, the Administrator
6 of FEMA may revoke or suspend funding of such grant,
7 in whole or in part.

8 (i) ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of
10 FEMA shall have access for the purpose of audit
11 and examination to any pertinent books, documents,
12 papers, or records of a grant recipient under this
13 section and to the pertinent books, documents, pa-
14 pers, or records of State and local governments, per-
15 sons, businesses, and other entities that are involved
16 in programs, projects, or activities for which assist-
17 ance is provided under this section.

18 (2) APPLICATION.—Paragraph (1) shall apply
19 with respect to audits and examinations conducted
20 by the Comptroller General of the United States or
21 by an authorized representative of the Comptroller
22 General.

23 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

24 (1) ADMINISTRATOR OF FEMA; CAREER FIRE
25 DEPARTMENT; COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENT;

1 VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT.—The terms “Ad-
2 ministrator of FEMA”, “career fire department”,
3 “combination fire department”, and “volunteer fire
4 department” have the meanings given such terms in
5 section 33(a) of the Federal Fire Prevention and
6 Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229(a)).

7 (2) COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE.—The term
8 “community paramedicine” means the operation of
9 first responders, including firefighters, emergency
10 medical technicians (EMTs), and paramedics, in
11 roles that serve to proactively make communities,
12 homes, and residents safer and prevent future med-
13 ical emergencies.

14 (3) FALL PREVENTION.—The term “fall pre-
15 vention” means the use of evidence-based measures
16 that decrease fall risks in older adults.

17 (4) FIRE SERVICE; LOCAL.—The terms “fire
18 service” and “local” have the meanings given such
19 terms in section 4 of the Federal Fire Prevention
20 and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2203).

21 (5) FIREFIGHTER.—The term “firefighter” has
22 the meaning given the term “employee in fire protec-
23 tion activities” in section 3(y) of the Fair Labor
24 Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 203(y)).

1 (6) STATE.—The term “State” has the mean-
2 ing given such term in section 2 of the Homeland
3 Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).

4 (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be
6 appropriated for the purposes of carrying out this
7 section, the following:

8 (A) \$1,000,000 for each of fiscal years
9 2026, 2027, and 2028.

10 (B) \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years
11 2029, 2030, and 2031.

12 (C) \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years
13 2032, 2033, and 2034.

14 (D) \$7,000,000 for fiscal year 2035.

15 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Of the
16 amounts authorized to be appropriated pursuant to
17 paragraph (1) for a fiscal year, the Administrator of
18 FEMA may use not more than five percent of such
19 amounts to cover salaries and expenses and other
20 administrative costs incurred by the Administrator
21 of FEMA to make grants and provide assistance
22 under this section.

23 (l) SUNSET OF AUTHORITIES.—This section expires
24 on September 30, 2036.