

The Health, Opportunity, and Personal Empowerment (HOPE) Act of 2020

Section-by-Section

SECTION 1. Short Title.

The title of the bill is the “Health, Opportunity, and Personal Empowerment Act of 2020” or “HOPE Act of 2020.”

SECTION 2. Findings.

Government safety net programs and nonprofit organizations pose as helpful resources for many low-income Americans to receive benefits. However, because of the additional obstacles, physical barriers, and time constraints that low-income individuals face, the application processes can become confusing and un navigable, causing these programs to be underutilized each year. However, technology and policy improvements can help to simplify these processes and increase long-term self-sufficiency of low-income residents.

SECTION 3. Definitions.

- Defines the term “secretaries” as the Secretaries of HHS, USDA, and HUD acting collaboratively.
- Defines the term “eligible entity” as any State, unit of general-purpose local government, Tribal Government, etc. that represents a smaller geographical area therein (including a neighborhood)
- Defines the term “target population” as an individual or household that meets any of the criteria outlined in the Act.
- Defines the term “partner nonprofit organization” as any nonprofit group described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

SECTION 4. HOPE Accounts Pilot Projects.

The Secretaries are authorized to allow eligible entities that apply to do so to carry out *HOPE Accounts Pilot Projects* to enable target populations of individuals to establish—through banks, credit unions, governmental or Tribal agencies—HOPE Accounts aimed at empowering low-income individuals and households to take control of the benefits they are eligible to access. These pilot projects will create or implement digital systems that allow an individual to apply for, submit, and manage documentation required to access benefits from a single client-facing technology platform.

SECTION 5. HOPE Action Plans Pilot Projects.

The Secretaries are authorized to allow eligible entities to carry out *HOPE Action Plans Pilot Projects* to enable target populations of individuals to partner with government and nonprofit organizations by entering into voluntary agreements to carry out long-term HOPE action plans that allow low-income

individuals and households to voluntarily work to create and achieve personal plans that ensure economic stability and growth.

SECTION 6. Competitive Grants for Pilot Projects.

This section establishes competitive grants for pilot projects and outlines guidelines for grants, general distribution requirements, and elements that provide preference for applications.

SECTION 7. HOPE Technology Innovation Contracts.

The Secretaries may hold a merit-based competition to award HOPE Technology Innovation Contracts to United States based private businesses and section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with relevant, successful experience in technology, to create technology apps, widgets, and templates that pilot entities can use to create HOPE accounts. This section outlines the number and size of contracts that may be allocated, as well as guidelines and preferences for qualified technology.

SECTION 8. Maintenance of Effort and Nondisplacement of Workers.

This section outlines protections to ensure *none of the pilot projects* carried out under the Act shall: decrease the overall monetary value of assistance given to any individual or family or overall funding for antipoverty programs spent by participating agencies; limit the legal rights of anyone in the target population; decrease overall public sector employment in any eligible pilot community; negatively impact the work requirements for existing government programs; reduce program integrity; track or monitor the physical location or immigration status of immigrants; enable any entity involved to share or sell client data obtained through those projects; or eliminate the existing ability of applicants to access government offices.

SECTION 9. Annual Report to Congress.

This section outlines the requirements of the Secretaries to submit annual reports to Congress regarding the projects.

SECTION 10. Authorization of Appropriations; Technical Assistance Authorized.

- \$10,000,000 to the Secretary of HUD, of which \$500,000 shall be used internally for staff and other expenses to plan, award, and oversee pilot projects under this Act and \$9,500,000 shall be available for grants under section 6.
- \$10,000,000 to the Secretary of Agriculture, of which \$500,000 shall be used internally for staff and other expenses to plan, award, and oversee pilot projects under this Act and \$9,500,000 shall be available for grants under section 6.
- \$15,000,000 to the Secretary of HHS, of which \$500,000 shall be used internally for staff and other expenses to plan, award, and oversee pilot projects under this Act and \$9,500,000 shall be available for grants under section 6, and 5,000,000 shall be available for contracts under section 7.