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(Original Signature of Member)

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a Department of Agriculture loan program to support mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for veterans of the Armed Forces to become farmers or ranchers.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BOST introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To establish a Department of Agriculture loan program to support mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for veterans of the Armed Forces to become farmers or ranchers.

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 “Veterans’ Agricultural
5 Apprenticeship Act of 2017”.

1 **SEC. 2. MENTORSHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**
2 **FOR VETERANS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO**
3 **BECOME FARMERS AND RANCHERS.**

4 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Agri-
5 culture shall establish a program to make direct loans to
6 farmers and ranchers who will provide mentorship and ap-
7 prenticeship opportunities for veterans of the Armed
8 Forces to learn the skills necessary to become a successful
9 farmer or rancher.

10 (b) AGREEMENTS WITH STATES.—The Secretary of
11 Agriculture shall carry out the mentorship and apprentice-
12 ship program through agreements with State departments
13 of agriculture that will—

14 (1) select veterans to participate in the pro-
15 gram;

16 (2) secure established farmers and ranchers to
17 provide the mentorship and apprenticeship opportu-
18 nities; and

19 (3) make and administer direct loans to support
20 the resulting mentorship and apprenticeship.

21 (c) ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.—As a condition of a loan
22 under the mentorship and apprenticeship program, a par-
23 ticipating veteran must be allowed to materially and sub-
24 stantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch
25 providing the mentorship and apprenticeship opportuni-
26 ties.

1 (d) TERMS OF LOANS.—

2 (1) INTEREST RATE.—A loan under the
3 mentorship and apprenticeship program shall made
4 without interest.

5 (2) TERM AND REPAYMENT.—The term of a
6 loan under the program may not exceed one year
7 and the loan shall be repaid after the harvest season
8 in such installments as the Secretary may require.

9 (e) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Of the amounts appro-
10 priated for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023 to fund
11 operation of the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture, the
12 Secretary shall use \$1,000,000 each of such fiscal years
13 to carry out this section.

14 (f) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT.—Not later
15 than March 1, 2022, the Comptroller General of the
16 United States shall submit to the Committee on Agri-
17 culture of the House of Representatives and the Com-
18 mittee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Sen-
19 ate a report evaluating the effectiveness of the mentorship
20 and apprenticeship program in assisting veterans who par-
21 ticipate in the program in becoming farmers and ranchers.

22 (g) VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term
23 “veteran” means an individual who has served in the
24 Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(10) of title 38

- 1 United States Code) and who has not previously operated
- 2 a farm or ranch.