



The MENTOR Act

House Sponsors: Reps. Paul Tonko (NY-20) & Jennifer McClellan (VA-4)

118th Congress

The backbone of the U.S. research enterprise

- In FY23, U.S. higher education research and development (R&D) expenditures totaled \$108.8 billion, with **\$59.7 billion funded by federal government dollars**.
- Graduate student and postdoctoral researchers are vital to university productivity through their work that includes conducting and publishing cutting-edge research, helping secure grant funding, and serving as mentors and instructors for undergraduate students and researchers.

Researchers at risk: mentoring crisis in academia

- At a time when U.S. competitiveness in science and technology is crucial, a mental health and mentoring crisis is draining our research pipeline instead of expanding and diversifying it.
- Research shows:
 - Up to **50% of graduate students experience depression, anxiety, or burnout symptoms** during their training.
 - In a survey of postdoctoral researchers by Nature, **51% considered leaving science** due to work-related mental health concerns.
 - Faculty advisors perceived as **positive and supportive can play a crucial role in mitigating the onset and severity of burnout**, as well as alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety.
 - Negative mentoring and workplace experiences for graduate students can cause **detrimental career and psychosocial effects**, due to their unique position as students and employees.

Support our researchers, strengthen our future!

The MENTOR Act of 2024 would help by:

- ❖ Directing the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to develop and implement **comprehensive guidelines for federal research agencies** to improve the mental health and mentoring of graduate and postdoctoral researchers by:
 - Establishing clear definitions for problematic behaviors at institutions of higher education.
 - Implementing standardized, confidential, and safe systems to report and address bullying, harassment, and poor mentorship.
 - Strengthening mentor-mentee relationships by assessing mentoring plans and benefit disclosures in grant applications and allowing grant funding to support mentoring activities.
 - Supporting mental well-being by ensuring access to affordable health care and implementing protections for researchers, with a focus on international and underrepresented groups.
- ❖ **Promote Continuous Evaluation and Improvement through Data Collection**
 - The National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) will conduct biennial evaluations on the mental health of graduate and postdoctoral researchers.
 - The Government Accountability Office (GAO) will evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines, recommend improvements, and identify additional research needs.

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