

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To require a pilot program to support members of the Armed Forces and
military families transitioning to civilian life, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. PADILLA introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require a pilot program to support members of the Armed
Forces and military families transitioning to civilian life,
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 “Building Readiness
5 and Integration for Dependents Going to Civilian Environ-
6 ments Act of 2026” or the “BRIDGE Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT MEMBERS OF THE**
2 **ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY FAMILIES**
3 **TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
5 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense
6 shall establish a non-clinical, community-based pilot pro-
7 gram under which eligible organizations shall provide sup-
8 port to members of the Armed Forces and military fami-
9 lies transitioning to civilian life.

10 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the pilot program
11 shall be—

12 (1) to provide personalized, whole-family transi-
13 tion and wellness support to strengthen resilience,
14 stability, and long-term well-being during and after
15 separation from the Armed Forces; and

16 (2) to treat transition as a whole-family life
17 change and complement (not duplicate) the Transi-
18 tion Assistance Program through upstream, prevent-
19 ative support.

20 (c) LOCATIONS; DURATION.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense
22 shall carry out the pilot program at four geographi-
23 cally diverse military installations during the three-
24 year period beginning on the date of the enactment
25 of this Act.

1 (2) LOCATIONS.—To the extent practicable, the
2 Secretary of Defense shall carry out the pilot pro-
3 gram at one military installation in each of the fol-
4 lowing areas:

5 (A) The West Coast of the United States.

6 (B) The Midwest of the United States.

7 (C) The East Coast of the United States.

8 (D) Outside of the United States.

9 (3) PREFERENCE.—In selecting locations for
10 the pilot program, the Secretary of Defense shall
11 give preference to locations that serve as major force
12 projection platforms.

13 (d) ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS; SELECTION.—The
14 Secretary of Defense shall select organizations to partici-
15 pate in the pilot program from among national organiza-
16 tions serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and
17 their families with a demonstrated capability to execute
18 national programs through a community-based lens to
19 provide or coordinate the provision of military transition
20 services for such individuals.

21 (e) ELIGIBLE MEMBERS AND FAMILIES; PRIORITY;
22 REFERRALS.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—An individual is eligible for
24 services under the pilot program if the individual
25 is—

1 (A) a member of the Armed Forces on ac-
2 tive duty who is within one year of separation
3 from the Armed Forces, including a single
4 member without dependents; or

5 (B) a member of the family of a member
6 of the Armed Forces described in subparagraph
7 (A).

8 (2) PRIORITY.—In selecting members of the
9 Armed Forces and families for the pilot program, or-
10 ganizations participating in the pilot program shall
11 prioritize—

12 (A) members of the Armed Forces facing
13 accelerated or involuntary separations from the
14 Armed Forces, and families of such members;
15 and

16 (B) members of the Armed Forces with
17 limited time for transition planning, and fami-
18 lies of such members.

19 (3) REFERRALS.—Eligible members of the
20 Armed Forces and families may be referred to the
21 pilot program through any of the following:

22 (A) The Transition Assistance Program.

23 (B) The command of the member.

24 (C) A partner organization.

25 (D) Self-referral.

1 (f) ACTIVITIES.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under the pilot program,
3 each organization participating in the pilot program,
4 in collaboration with local Transition Assistance
5 Program offices, shall—

6 (A) identify eligible members of the Armed
7 Forces and families;

8 (B) provide to such members and families,
9 during the one-year period following separation
10 from the Armed Forces, the services described
11 in paragraph (2); and

12 (C) track the progress of such members
13 and families.

14 (2) SERVICES.—In carrying out paragraph
15 (1)(B), each organization participating in the pilot
16 program shall—

17 (A) provide resources, training, and com-
18 munity connection support, including—

19 (i) peer-led support groups;

20 (ii) resilience workshops;

21 (iii) a digital resource hub focused on
22 emotional wellness, practical life skills, and
23 community reintegration for spouses, chil-
24 dren, and caregivers;

1 (iv) employment assistance for
2 spouses;

3 (v) skills training and credentialing;

4 (vi) benefits navigation; and

5 (vii) reintegration and wellness sup-
6 port;

7 (B) assign each single member of the
8 Armed Forces or family, as the case may be, a
9 dedicated transition coordinator to conduct as-
10 sessments, develop personalized transition
11 plans, and provide high-touch navigation across
12 employment, education, healthcare, benefits,
13 and community resources;

14 (C) perform a whole-family wellness and
15 transition assessment that produces a cus-
16 tomized transition roadmap aligned to separa-
17 tion timeline, reason for separation, and family
18 dynamics;

19 (D) establish tailored support pathways
20 based on individualized needs rather than a
21 one-size-fits-all approach; and

22 (E) connect families to and coordinate with
23 existing Federal, State, nonprofit, and commu-
24 nity resources, rather than create duplicative
25 programs.

1 (g) OUTCOMES.—Each organization participating in
2 the pilot program shall track the following:

3 (1) Short-term outcomes, from 0 to 6 months
4 post-separation, including readiness and confidence,
5 stress, status of transition plans, and resource con-
6 nections.

7 (2) Mid-term outcomes, from 6 to 12 months
8 post-separation, including employment outcomes, fi-
9 nancial stability, and family wellbeing.

10 (3) Long-term outcomes, from 12 to 36 months
11 post-separation, including employment outcomes, re-
12 silience, and crisis intervention needs.

13 (h) IMPLEMENTATION.—In carrying out the pilot
14 program, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of
15 Veterans Affairs shall coordinate and ensure a seamless
16 post-separation handoff of services between the Depart-
17 ment of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

18 (i) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
19 on which the pilot program terminates, the Secretary of
20 Defense shall submit to Congress a report that includes
21 the following:

22 (1) A detailed accounting of the results of the
23 pilot program.

24 (2) A recommendation on whether to extend the
25 pilot program.

1 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 (1) PILOT PROGRAM.—The term “pilot pro-
3 gram” means the pilot program established under
4 subsection (a).

5 (2) TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—The
6 term “Transition Assistance Program” means the
7 program of the Department of Defense for
8 preseparation counseling, employment assistance,
9 and other transitional services provided under sec-
10 tions 1142 and 1144 of title 10, United States Code.