

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1650

To establish a national, research-based, and comprehensive home study assessment process for the evaluation of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents and provide funding to States and Indian tribes to adopt such process.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 21, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN (for himself, Mr. RUSSELL, and Ms. BASS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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## A BILL

To establish a national, research-based, and comprehensive home study assessment process for the evaluation of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents and provide funding to States and Indian tribes to adopt such process.

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 “National Adoption and  
5 Foster Care Home Study Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM FOR THE IMPLEMEN-**  
2 **TATION OF A NATIONAL HOME STUDY PROC-**  
3 **ESS.**

4 Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment  
5 Act and Adoption Reform Act of 1978 (42 U.S.C. 5111  
6 et seq.) is amended—

7 (1) in section 203(b) (42 U.S.C. 5113(b))—

8 (A) in paragraph (3)(A), by striking “(in-  
9 cluding” and inserting “(including the national  
10 database established under section 203A(c) but  
11 containing”;

12 (B) in paragraph (10), by striking “; and”  
13 and inserting “;”;

14 (C) in paragraph (11), by striking the pe-  
15 riod and inserting “; and”; and

16 (D) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(12) establish a demonstration program, not  
18 later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the  
19 National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study  
20 Act, through which each participating State or In-  
21 dian tribe—

22 “(A) adopts the uniform, research-based  
23 home study methodology for the evaluation of  
24 prospective foster parents and adoptive parents  
25 developed by the Secretary under section  
26 203A(a); and

1 “(B) provides data gathered through oper-  
2 ation of the program to the Secretary, as the  
3 Secretary may require for purposes of the na-  
4 tional database under section 203A(e).”;

5 (2) by inserting after section 203 (42 U.S.C.  
6 5113) the following:

7 **“SEC. 203A. NATIONAL HOME STUDY DEMONSTRATION PRO-**  
8 **GRAMS; NATIONAL DATABASE.**

9 “(a) PROGRAM METHODOLOGY.—Each demonstra-  
10 tion program established by a State or Indian tribe in ac-  
11 cordance with section 203(b)(12) shall use a uniform, re-  
12 search-based home study methodology for the evaluation  
13 of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents (devel-  
14 oped by the Secretary after consultation with stakeholders  
15 and professionals in the field of child welfare) that shall—

16 “(1) incorporate—

17 “(A) information gathering tools, includ-  
18 ing—

19 “(i) an initial written questionnaire  
20 that is a uniform set of closed-ended ques-  
21 tions with a variety of possible answers  
22 that provides significant family informa-  
23 tion;

24 “(ii) a secondary in-person question-  
25 naire that is administered in a private set-

1           ting in the home, and, if applicable, with  
2           both applicants present together; and

3           “(iii) guidelines that describe stand-  
4           ardized questions that an individual serv-  
5           ing as a reference for the applicant uses in  
6           writing a reference letter, to be sent di-  
7           rectly to such individual and not shared  
8           with the applicant, and which is consistent  
9           with the questionnaires described in  
10          clauses (i) and (ii);

11          “(B) a written guidance document to assist  
12          home study practitioners in performing a psy-  
13          chosocial evaluation of the applicant that—

14               “(i) provides instructions on how to  
15               systematically analyze information learned  
16               from the information gathering tools de-  
17               scribed in subparagraph (A) in order to  
18               identify specific strengths and concerns of  
19               the applicant;

20               “(ii) provides sufficient information  
21               for the home study practitioner to deter-  
22               mine the significance of behaviors and  
23               events in the applicant’s life in relation to  
24               being a successful foster care or adoption  
25               provider; and

1                   “(iii) includes a rating system that  
2                   will be incorporated into the home study  
3                   report described in subparagraph (C); and

4                   “(C) a model home study report that may,  
5                   at the discretion of the Secretary, be cus-  
6                   tomized by a State or Indian tribe as necessary  
7                   to comply with State or tribal and local regula-  
8                   tions and requirements;

9                   “(2) ensure ongoing training of home study cer-  
10                  tified personnel; and

11                  “(3) designate a home study auditor to ensure  
12                  quality control and accuracy of information provided  
13                  to placing agencies.

14                  “(b) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall make grants to  
15                  States and Indian tribes to enable and encourage the  
16                  States and Indian tribes to establish demonstration pro-  
17                  grams in accordance with section 203(b)(12).

18                  “(c) NATIONAL DATABASE.—The Secretary shall es-  
19                  tablish a secure national database of home study reports  
20                  filed by home study practitioners using the home study  
21                  methodology described in subsection (a). Such database  
22                  shall be accessible only to State and tribal foster care and  
23                  adoption agencies, or a designated entity, as determined  
24                  by the lead agency in the State, to assist with the selection  
25                  of prospective foster parents and adoptive parents.

1           “(d) CONDITION ON PARTICIPATION IN DEMONSTRA-  
2 TION PROJECT.—As a condition for participating in the  
3 demonstration program under section 203(b)(12), a State  
4 or Indian tribe shall agree to recognize as valid all home  
5 study reports listed in the database described in subsection  
6 (c), including such reports filed by other States or Indian  
7 tribes.

8           “(e) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall enter into a  
9 contract with an independent entity to—

10                   “(1) carry out a periodic evaluation of the home  
11 study methodology established under subsection (a)  
12 and the demonstration programs established in ac-  
13 cordance with section 203(b)(12); and

14                   “(2) submit to the Secretary a report that in-  
15 cludes—

16                           “(A) a description of the extent to which  
17 such methodology—

18                                   “(i) meets the requirements of each of  
19 paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection  
20 (a);

21                                   “(ii) expedites the screening of care-  
22 givers to promote more family-based care  
23 over institutional care for children;

1                   “(iii) provides cost savings to State or  
2                   Indian tribe foster care and adoption sys-  
3                   tems;

4                   “(iv) reduces the number of children  
5                   waiting for foster care or adoptive place-  
6                   ment; and

7                   “(v) reduces the number of prospec-  
8                   tive families waiting for foster care or  
9                   adoptive placement; and

10                  “(B) recommendations for expanding the  
11                  demonstration program and home study meth-  
12                  odology to all States and Indian tribes.”; and

13                  (3) in section 205(b) (42 U.S.C. 5115(b)), by  
14                  adding at the end the following: “The Secretary may  
15                  allocate such sums as the Secretary determines to be  
16                  appropriate from the funds appropriated under sub-  
17                  section (a) for activities under section 203(b)(12)  
18                  and 203A.”.

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