To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Coons (for himself and Mr. Sasse) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on ________________

A BILL

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Building Civic Bridges Act”.

1

2

3

4

5
SEC. 2. CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.

Subtitle H of title I of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12653 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

```
PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING

SEC. 198T. OFFICE OF CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.

“(a) Establishment.—There shall be in the Corporation an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding (in this section referred to as the ‘Office’). The Office shall be headed by an Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding, who shall be designated by the Chief Executive Officer pursuant to section 195(b).

“(b) Duties.—The Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding shall carry out each of the following:

“(1) Administer the grant program described in subsection (d) to support civic bridgebuilding across the United States, including by establishing standardized criteria (based on principles of scientific research) to track the effectiveness of projects and activities funded under such program.

“(2) Support the Corporation in providing training in skills and techniques relevant to civic bridgebuilding (with the consideration of best practices collected by the Office, including through input from the Advisory Committee under subsection (c))—
```
“(A) for participants (including individuals who have been selected to be participants) of a program receiving funding under a national service law; and

“(B) upon request by an organization that receives funding under a national service law or that is carrying out a program in which participants described in subparagraph (A) are participating, for such organization.

“(3) Select the members of the Advisory Committee under subsection (c).

“(4) Support research and evaluations on civic bridgebuilding and the dissemination of related information, including through—

“(A) evaluation and oversight of the grant program described in subsection (d);

“(B) as the Corporation determines necessary, collaboration (including through the evaluation of the activities of the Corporation relating to civic bridgebuilding and civic engagement) between the Office and other offices (such as the Office of Research and Evaluation), teams, or individuals within the Corporation; and
“(C) the establishment of a publicly-available collection of publications for a research base for the purposes of monitoring national metrics for civic bridgebuilding and assembling research focused on evaluating the extent to which civic bridgebuilding and civic engagement activities strengthen or weaken other civic bridgebuilding and civic engagement activities and outcomes in the United States.

“(5) Activate a public conversation about the importance of civic bridgebuilding by convening and coordinating civic bridgebuilding programs and providing resources, networking, and collaboration opportunities to individuals and entities in the civic bridgebuilding field, such as through—

“(A) network cultivation to strengthen the community of those involved, interested, or engaged in the civic bridgebuilding field, including through activities such as—

“(i) in-person and virtual events for the public to showcase impactful practices, bring civic bridgebuilding leaders together, present relevant research, and explore emerging needs that would benefit from
civic bridgebuilding?/civic bridgebuilding needs ];

“(ii) organizing peer-learning opportunities to facilitate conversations within the civic bridgebuilding field;

“(iii) organizing and distributing lists of civic bridgebuilding leaders and organizations and groups in the civic bridgebuilding field; and

“(iv) coordinating national communications among civic bridgebuilding leaders, including through the promotion of civic bridgebuilding programs and sharing stories of local impact; and

“(B) developing or distributing resources to expand best practices in the civic bridgebuilding field, including through—

“(i) the curation of a digital resource hub focused on sharing resources from entities that receive grants under subsection (d), civic bridgebuilding leaders, civic bridgebuilding programs, or the publicly-available collection of publications for a research base established under paragraph (4)(C); and
“(ii) the production of new resources, training, or best practices based on lessons from the civic bridgebuilding field.

“(c) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

“(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding an Advisory Committee.

“(2) MEMBERS.—

“(A) SELECTION.—The Advisory Committee shall be composed of 9 members selected by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding, including a member designated by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding as the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee, and such members shall be civic bridgebuilding leaders—

“(i) who represent diverse ideological, religious, racial, regional, or ethnic communities; and

“(ii) with relevant experience and expertise from the civic bridgebuilding field.

“(B) TERMS OF SERVICE.—A member of the Advisory Committee shall serve for a term of 3 years.

“(3) DUTIES.—The Advisory Committee shall carry out each of the following:
“(A) Provide advice and consultation to the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding on the priorities and administration of the Office.

“(B) Conduct an annual review of grants awarded under subsection (d), with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying any gaps or needs that emerged in an application cycle.

“(C) Conduct an annual review of the process of awarding grants under subsection (d), including a review of rubrics or metrics for selection of grant recipients used by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding.

“(D) Review the analysis provided under the peer review process under subsection (d)(5).

“(d) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PILOT GRANT PROGRAM.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts appropriated to carry out this subsection, the Corporation (acting through the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding and in consultation with the Advisory Committee established under subsection (c))—

“(A) shall carry out a pilot program for a 3-year period to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to support civic
bridgebuilding programs across the United States; and

“(B) may carry out such a pilot program for additional 3-year periods.

“(2) GRANT PERIOD.—A grant awarded under this subsection shall be for a 1-year period. Grants shall be awarded under this subsection in 3 grant cycles for each 3-year period of the program carried out under paragraph (1).

“(3) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Corporation at such time, in such manner, and containing such information and assurances as the Corporation may require, including—

“(A) a description of the project that will be funded with the grant;

“(B) an explanation of how that such project will—

“(i) engage diverse communities;

“(ii) facilitate the establishment or continuation of civic bridgebuilding, which may include addressing the root causes of polarization as articulated in the publicly-available collection of publications for a re-
search base established under subsection (b)(4)(C);

“(iii) reflect research supporting the efficacy and impact of the proposed approach for the project; and

“(iv) ensure physical, social, and psychological safety for all participants involved in the project;

“(C) a description of evidence-based best practices for how such safety will be achieved; and

“(D) an assurance that the eligible entity will report outcomes of such project to track effectiveness based on standardized criteria established by the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding under subsection (b)(1) or will evaluate the impact of such project based on principles of scientific research.

“(4) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this subsection shall use the grant funds to carry out a project to advance civic bridgebuilding in communities across the United States, which may include addressing the root causes of polarization as articulated in the publicly-
available collection of publications for a research
base established under subsection (b)(4)(C).

“(5) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—The Corporation
shall establish a peer review process which shall in-
clude consultation with research communities in the
civic bridgebuilding field to analyze the process of
awarding grants (and the grants that are awarded)
under this subsection.

“(e) COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller
General of the United States shall, on an annual basis,
submit to Congress a report, which summarizes and as-
seesses the effectiveness and impact of the activities carried
out under grants awarded under subsection (d).

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.—The term ‘civic
bridgebuilding’—

“(A) means an activity that—

“(i) fosters respect between diverse
communities;

“(ii) strengthens relationships across
lines of difference;

“(iii) forges a sense of common civic
purpose; and

“(iv) seeks to solve a community prob-
lem and diminish polarization; and
“(B) includes—

“(i) activities that take place in local communities, where individuals and institutions come together to build empathy, strengthen belonging, and address local issues; and

“(ii) activities at the field level, where civic bridgebuilding leaders work together to share research and best practices, learn from one another, and grow other civic bridgebuilding.

“(2) **Civic Bridgebuilding Leader.**—The term ‘civic bridgebuilding leader’ means an individual who leads civic bridgebuilding programs or efforts.

“(3) **Civic Engagement.**—The term ‘civic engagement’ means an individual or collective action designed to address a public concern or an unmet human, educational, health care, environmental, or public safety need.

“(4) **Eligible Entity.**—The term ‘eligible entity’ means a nonprofit entity, public institution, elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, religious group, or consortium of any such entities.
“(5) Public institution.—The term ‘public institution’ means a library or unit of State, local, or special purpose government.

“(6) Research.—The term ‘research’ means research which embodies principles of scientific research.

“(7) Research base.—The term ‘research base’ means any publications that contain observations, analysis, and conclusions based on principles of scientific research with respect to the challenges of political and social polarization in the United States, and practical approaches to strengthen social cohesion, foster a sense of national connection, or improve intergroup relations in divided communities.

“(g) Authorization of Appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025.”.

SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents in section 1(b) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended by inserting at the end of the item relating to subtitle H of title I, the following:

“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGBUILDING

“Sec. 198T. Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.”.