S 1377

EQUAL Defense Act of 2019

Congress: 116 (2019–2021, Ended)
Chamber: Senate
Policy Area: Crime and Law Enforcement
Introduced: May 8, 2019
Current Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.
Latest Action: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (May 8, 2019)
Official Text: https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1377

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Harris, Kamala D. [D-CA]
Party: Democratic • **State:** CA • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors

No cosponsors are listed for this bill.

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Judiciary Committee	Senate	Referred To	May 8, 2019

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Crime and Law Enforcement

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
116 HR 2868	Identical bill	**Jun 26, 2019:** Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.

Summary (as of May 8, 2019)

Ensuring Quality Access to Legal Defense Act of 2019 or the EQUAL Defense Act of 2019

This bill establishes and modifies certain programs that support the delivery of public defense services (i.e., legal services for criminal defendants who cannot afford counsel).

Specifically, the bill directs the Department of Justice (DOJ) to award grants to state and local governments, tribal organizations, and public defender offices for public defense. A grant recipient must use the grant to establish a data collection process, develop workload limits, and satisfy specified compensation requirements (e.g., pay parity between public defenders and prosecutors).

The bill also directs DOJ to award grants to nonprofits and government organizations to train public defenders, court-appointed attorneys, and contract attorneys.

Additionally, a state that receives Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program funds must annually submit to DOJ information related to the legal representation of defendants in criminal cases.

It also reauthorizes through FY2022 the student loan repayment program for prosecutors and public defenders and otherwise revises the program, including by increasing the maximum benefit amount.

Actions Timeline

- **May 8, 2019:** Introduced in Senate
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