

# **Civil Mobility Compact and Launchpad Pilot Program Act**

A formal policy proposal to establish voluntary, rights-protected transition infrastructure pilots for adults in the Hollow Middle

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Status: Working proposal for pressure-testing, legal review, stakeholder refinement, and pilot design

## **Submission posture**

This document is drafted as a policy discussion proposal, not final legislative text. It is intended for review by congressional offices, state workforce agencies, local workforce boards, nonprofit operators, organizational sponsors, participant advocates, legal counsel, funders, and evaluators.

Cover visual: America Needs Transition Infrastructure

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- 1. Executive Summary**

The United States has extensive systems for emergency response, workforce training, education, housing support, reentry, apprenticeship, and public service. Yet many adults remain stuck in a transition gap between crisis stabilization and durable independence. This proposal refers to that gap as the Hollow Middle.

The Hollow Middle describes people who may be working, employable, or motivated, but whose life conditions are too unstable for ordinary market participation to convert effort into mobility. Housing instability, transportation failure, childcare disruption, thin credentials, weak networks, lack of savings, medical instability, and low digital or AI confidence can combine to make one unabsorbed emergency enough to end progress.

This proposal recommends a limited, independently evaluated pilot program called Launchpad. Launchpad would authorize grants to approved operators to create voluntary, time-limited, rights-protected mobility pathways. The pathways would combine paid work, skill-building, mentorship, emergency stabilization, AI and digital literacy, financial coaching, credential access, and transition planning.

The operating agreement for the model is the Civil Mobility Compact: a written, enforceable compact among the participant, operator, organizational sponsor, and independent evaluator or ombudsman. Private household sponsorship is intentionally excluded from the core model. Sponsors must be organizations with formal compliance duties, wage standards, grievance procedures, and removal authority.

The proposal is designed as a disciplined pilot, not a national scale-up. A responsible first test would involve 150 to 300 participants across two to three sites, with pre-registered outcome measures, 12-, 24-, and 36-month evaluation, public reporting, and a sunset clause.

### **Core thesis**

Mobility requires transition infrastructure: conditions where effort can compound into independence rather than collapse under one emergency.

### **Proposal at a glance**

Element

Recommended framework

Program name

Launchpad Pilot Program

Operating mechanism

Civil Mobility Compact

Lead administrator

Secretary of Labor, in coordination with relevant federal agencies

Eligible operators

Workforce boards, nonprofits, community colleges, public agencies, or approved civic intermediaries

Sponsors

Organizations only; no private household sponsorship in version one

## Participants

Adults facing transition-fragile conditions, including unstable work, thin credentials, housing instability, reentry barriers, or AI-era disruption

## Pilot size

150-300 participants across 2-3 sites for initial demonstration

## Planning range

\$15,000-\$40,000 per participant per year, depending on intensity of supports

## Guardrails

Voluntary enrollment, direct wages, exit rights, independent advocacy, grievance channels, data protections, wage compliance, and sunset clause

## **2. Background and Need**

Federal and state workforce systems already recognize the importance of employment, training, supportive services, employer alignment, and regional coordination. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), for example, is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services and to match employers with skilled workers. The U.S. Department of Labor also describes WIOA as a vehicle for helping individuals with barriers to employment enter high-quality jobs and careers.

WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs provide useful precedent for employment services, training opportunities, work experience, and assistance for people facing barriers to employment. Registered Apprenticeship also provides a useful precedent: paid work experience, mentorship, progressive wages, classroom instruction, and a portable credential.

Launchpad is not intended to duplicate these systems. It is intended to create a demonstration framework for the transition-fragile population that existing systems may touch but often do not bundle into one accountable pathway.

### **The Hollow Middle**

The Hollow Middle is the gap between emergency support and durable independence. It is where a person may technically be employed, trainable, or motivated, yet lacks the transition infrastructure needed to sustain progress.

Common barriers include unstable rent, transportation breakdown, inconsistent childcare, untreated medical or mental-health needs, food insecurity, no savings buffer, unfamiliar workplace norms, no reliable mentor, no professional references, and low digital or AI confidence.

A single-service intervention may not be sufficient when the underlying problem is a stack of compounding instability. Launchpad treats mobility as a bundled transition problem rather than a single-service problem.

Figure 1. The instability stack: one unabsorbed emergency can end progress.

## **3. Policy Objective**

The objective of this proposal is to authorize a limited pilot program that tests whether s

structured, rights-protected transition infrastructure can improve mobility outcomes for adults in the Hollow Middle.

### **Primary objectives**

Increase sustained employment, earnings growth, credential completion, and job quality for participants.

Improve housing stability, savings, emergency resilience, digital confidence, and AI literacy.

Create accountable organizational sponsorship pathways without private household control or dependency.

Test whether bundled transition support outperforms standard services alone.

Build a model that can sunset, redesign, or scale only after independent evaluation.

### **Non-objectives**

The program is not a servant-class program, domestic labor model, work-for-room-and-board arrangement, or unpaid service mandate.

The program is not compulsory national service, prison labor expansion, debt bondage, or a replacement for regular employees.

The program is not intended to transfer authority over vulnerable people to private households or informal sponsors.

Figure 2. The bridge gap: mobility requires transition infrastructure.

## **4. Program Model: Launchpad and the Civil Mobility Compact**

Launchpad is a voluntary, time-limited, rights-protected pilot program. The Civil Mobility Compact is the written agreement that governs the relationship among the participant, operator, organizational sponsor, and evaluator.

Figure 3. Civil Mobility Compact: four parties, one agreement.

### **Four parties**

#### **Participant**

An eligible adult who voluntarily enters a structured pathway toward independence.

#### **Operator**

A workforce board, nonprofit intermediary, community college, public agency, or approved civic institution responsible for intake, matching, case management, payment coordination, compliance, and reporting.

#### **Organizational sponsor**

An employer, nonprofit, public agency, union pathway, training provider, healthcare system, logistics partner, trades partner, or civic institution that provides structured paid opportunity.

#### **Evaluator or ombudsman**

An independent entity that monitors outcomes, rights protections, grievances, abuse-pre

vention standards, and program integrity.

### **Core participant pathway**

20-30 hours per week of paid work or structured work-based learning.

8-12 hours per week of skill-building, credential preparation, digital literacy, AI literacy, financial coaching, or related instruction.

Weekly mentorship and peer cohort participation.

Monthly case-manager review and transition-plan updates.

Emergency stabilization supports designed to prevent ordinary disruptions from ending progress.

Exit planning beginning in month one.

## **5. Participant Rights and Prohibited Conduct**

Participant rights are not add-ons to the model. They are the center of the model. Launchpad should exist only if it can increase participant freedom, not create a new form of dependency.

### **Participant bill of rights**

Voluntary enrollment and informed consent.

Right to exit without debt penalty, retaliation, or loss of unrelated public benefits.

Wages paid directly to the participant for all covered work.

Clear written terms in plain language.

Independent participant advocate or ombudsman access.

Control of personal documents, phone, money, accounts, medication, and data.

Outside communication, privacy, and freedom from isolation.

Safe housing standards where housing support is included.

Access to medical, mental-health, legal-aid, and emergency relocation referrals.

Right to refuse unsafe, degrading, sexual, unlawful, or non-covered labor.

Religious and political freedom.

Transition support after exit.

### **Prohibited conduct**

Forced participation or participation conditioned on unrelated survival benefits, parole, housing, immigration status, or emergency services without independent safeguards.

Debt, withheld benefits, or repayment penalties used to compel participation.

Withholding wages, identification documents, phones, medication, or personal accounts.

Unpaid labor outside written terms.

Sexual, degrading, coerced, unsafe, or non-covered labor.

Threats involving homelessness, law enforcement, parole, immigration, public benefits, or sponsor retaliation.

Housing conditional on obedience or continued work.

Replacing regular employees with underpaid participants.

Surveillance, public shaming, coercive monitoring, or data abuse.

Punitive extensions of program terms.

Any sponsor acting as owner, guardian, creditor, probation officer, or private controller of the participant.

Moral boundary

Support must never become possession.

## **6. Funding and Eligible Uses**

Launchpad should be funded through accountable public, philanthropic, employer, and institutional channels. Funds should flow through approved operators or public-private program structures, not through private individuals.

The federal pilot should be designed to complement existing workforce, apprenticeship, public service, reentry, housing-stability, and supportive-services systems. It should not override existing program requirements or create duplicative bureaucracy.

### **Potential alignment with existing federal frameworks**

WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs, including local workforce development boards and American Job Centers.

Registered Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pathways where paid work, mentorship, progressive wages, related instruction, and portable credentials are appropriate.

National Dislocated Worker Grants where communities face major economic dislocation or disaster-related workforce impacts.

HUD Continuum of Care or related housing-stability systems where eligible participants face homelessness or housing instability, subject to all program rules.

AmeriCorps or civic-service structures where service, capacity building, and community-based organizations are appropriate, subject to all program rules and legal limits.

### **Eligible uses of funds**

Wage subsidies or paid work-based learning supports.

Training, credentialing, and related instruction.

Transportation support.

Childcare navigation or allowable childcare support.

Housing stabilization, housing navigation, or transition stipends where legally permitted

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Emergency stabilization funds.

Matched savings or transition grants.

Case management and participant advocacy.

Digital access, AI literacy, and equipment necessary for approved training.

Evaluation, compliance, data privacy, and public reporting.

**7. Pilot Design and Implementation Timeline**

Phase

Timeframe

Deliverables

Design and legal review

Days 1-30

Target population, rights framework, prohibited conduct, wage rules, funding constraints, draft compact.

Partner formation

Days 31-60

Operator, sponsor network, training partner, evaluator, participant advocate, legal-aid referral channel.

Pilot design

Days 61-90

Eligibility, intake, matching, support budgets, data plan, outcome measures, emergency transfer process.

Launch

Months 4-12

Participant enrollment, paid work placements, training, mentorship, stabilization supports, compliance monitoring.

Evaluation and adjustment

Months 12-36

Interim reports, participant feedback, compliance audits, cost analysis, outcome comparison.

Sunset or scale decision

Month 36+

Terminate, redesign, or expand based on independent evidence and safety performance.

**Recommended first cohort**

Adults 18-35, with an initial emphasis on adults 18-30.

Foster-care alumni aging into unstable adulthood.

Rural underemployed adults disconnected from higher-wage work.

Housing-unstable workers who are employed but not secure.

Justice-involved adults through a separate voluntary reentry pathway.

Workers displaced or threatened by automation and credential gaps.

Low-income adults requiring digital and AI upskilling.

## **8. Evaluation, Reporting, and Sunset**

Launchpad should be evidence-seeking, not evidence-pretending. The authorizing legislation should require independent evaluation, pre-registered outcomes, public reporting, and a sunset provision.

### **Primary outcomes**

Sustained employment and job retention after exit.

Earnings growth and job quality.

Credential completion and progression into apprenticeships, employment, or further training.

Housing stability and reduction in crisis-service reliance.

Savings accumulation, debt reduction, and emergency resilience.

Digital and AI confidence.

Participant satisfaction, exit experience, grievance rates, and rights-protection performance.

Cost-effectiveness compared with standard services.

### **Evaluation warning**

The program should not reward retention for its own sake. If sponsors or operators are rewarded simply for keeping participants in the program, retention can become a trap. The real standard is whether participants become more independent, including the freedom to leave.

## **9. Section-by-Section Legislative Framework**

### **Sec. 1. Short title**

Establishes the short title as the Civil Mobility Compact and Launchpad Pilot Program Act.

### **Sec. 2. Findings**

Finds that many adults face transition-fragile conditions that prevent employment, training, and emerging technology adoption from converting into durable independence.

### **Sec. 3. Purposes**

Authorizes a pilot to test bundled transition infrastructure through paid work, skill-building, stabilization support, mentorship, participant rights, and independent evaluation.

### **Sec. 4. Definitions**

Defines participant, operator, organizational sponsor, evaluator, Civil Mobility Compact, covered work, prohibited conduct, and transition infrastructure.

### **Sec. 5. Establishment of pilot grants**

Directs the Secretary of Labor to award competitive grants to eligible operators for a limited number of demonstration sites.

## **Sec. 6. Eligible operators and sponsors**

Defines eligible operators and requires organizational sponsors to be vetted entities with formal obligations; excludes private household sponsorship from version one.

## **Sec. 7. Civil Mobility Compact requirements**

Requires written terms, wages, role descriptions, training, support services, exit rights, grievance channels, and data protections.

## **Sec. 8. Participant rights**

Establishes statutory rights including voluntary enrollment, direct wages, exit without penalty, independent advocacy, privacy, and control over personal documents and accounts.

## **Sec. 9. Prohibited conduct**

Prohibits coercion, debt bondage, unpaid labor outside terms, withholding documents, retaliation, degrading labor, labor displacement, and punitive term extensions.

## **Sec. 10. Funding uses**

Authorizes uses for wage subsidies, training, support services, emergency stabilization, case management, matched savings, evaluation, and compliance.

## **Sec. 11. Evaluation**

Requires independent evaluation, pre-registered outcomes, participant satisfaction measurement, abuse-prevention metrics, and comparison groups where feasible.

## **Sec. 12. Reports**

Requires annual reports to Congress and public reporting by grantees.

## **Sec. 13. Sunset**

Terminates authority unless reauthorized after evidence review.

## **Sec. 14. Authorization of appropriations**

Authorizes such sums as may be necessary or a specified pilot appropriation to be determined by Congress.

# **10. Model Congressional Discussion Draft**

Drafting note

The following language is a policy-draft scaffold for counsel and committee staff. It is not final statutory language.

## **SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the "Civil Mobility Compact and Launchpad Pilot Program Act."

## **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

Congress finds that many adults face compounding barriers to employment, training, housing stability, credential access, digital confidence, and economic mobility;

existing workforce, education, housing, reentry, apprenticeship, and public-service systems provide important services but may not consistently bundle transition supports into one accountable, rights-protected pathway;

emerging technology and artificial intelligence are increasing the need for applied digital confidence, career transition infrastructure, and pathways into higher-value work; and any program serving vulnerable participants must include enforceable rights, independent advocacy, wage protections, grievance processes, and safeguards against coercion, dependency, and labor displacement.

### **SEC. 3. PURPOSES.**

to authorize a limited pilot program to test voluntary, rights-protected transition infrastructure for adults facing barriers to durable independence;

to support paid work, skill-building, mentorship, AI and digital literacy, financial coaching, emergency stabilization, credential access, and transition planning;

to require organizational sponsorship only, with no private household sponsorship in the initial pilot; and

to require independent evaluation and a sunset or scale decision based on evidence.

### **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

The term "Civil Mobility Compact" means a written agreement among a participant, operator, organizational sponsor, and evaluator or ombudsman that establishes the participant pathway, covered work, supports, rights, exit terms, grievance procedures, and data protections.

The term "operator" means an eligible workforce board, nonprofit intermediary, community college, public agency, or approved civic institution awarded funds under this Act.

The term "organizational sponsor" means a vetted employer, nonprofit, public agency, training provider, union pathway, healthcare system, logistics partner, trades partner, or civic institution that provides structured paid opportunity under a Civil Mobility Compact.

The term "participant" means an eligible adult who voluntarily enrolls in a pathway authorized under this Act.

The term "transition infrastructure" means the bundle of supports that may include paid work, skill-building, credential access, mentorship, emergency stabilization, transportation, childcare navigation, digital and AI literacy, financial coaching, case management, and exit planning.

### **SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF LAUNCHPAD PILOT GRANTS.**

The Secretary of Labor, acting through the Employment and Training Administration and in coordination with other relevant federal agencies, shall award competitive grants to eligible operators to establish, administer, and evaluate Launchpad pilot programs in accordance with this Act.

### **SEC. 6. ELIGIBLE OPERATORS AND ORGANIZATIONAL SPONSORS.**

To receive a grant under this Act, an operator shall demonstrate capacity to administer participant intake, matching, payments, case management, rights protections, grievance processes, compliance, reporting, and evaluation cooperation.

An organizational sponsor shall be a vetted entity with formal duties under a Civil Mobility Compact. No private household may serve as an organizational sponsor under the initial pilot authority.

An operator shall suspend or remove a sponsor that violates participant rights, wage requirements, prohibited-conduct rules, or reporting obligations.

#### **SEC. 7. PARTICIPANT RIGHTS.**

A participant shall have the right to voluntary enrollment, clear written terms, wages paid directly to the participant, independent advocacy, privacy, outside communication, control of personal documents and accounts, and exit without debt penalty or retaliation.

A participant shall not be required to surrender identification documents, phones, medication, financial accounts, wages, benefits, or data access as a condition of participation.

Participation shall not be used as a condition of unrelated public benefits, parole, housing, immigration status, or emergency services except where specifically authorized by law and subject to independent safeguards.

#### **SEC. 8. PROHIBITED CONDUCT.**

No operator or sponsor may use debt, withheld wages, withheld documents, benefit threats, immigration threats, law-enforcement threats, housing threats, or other coercive means to compel participation.

No participant may be required to perform unpaid labor outside the written compact, sexual labor, degrading labor, unsafe labor, or labor not covered by wage and safety protections.

No sponsor may use participants to displace regular employees or suppress wages.

No operator or sponsor may extend participation as punishment or condition housing on obedience to a sponsor.

#### **SEC. 9. ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS.**

Funds may be used for wage subsidies, work-based learning, training, credentialing, transportation, childcare navigation, housing stabilization where permitted, emergency support, matched savings, case management, participant advocacy, digital access, AI literacy, evaluation, compliance, and reporting.

#### **SEC. 10. EVALUATION AND REPORTS.**

The Secretary shall require each grantee to participate in an independent evaluation with pre-registered outcomes, comparison methodology where feasible, and measurement of participant outcomes, rights-protection performance, grievances, sponsor compliance, and cost-effectiveness.

The Secretary shall submit an annual report to Congress and a final report not later than 180 days after completion of the pilot period.

## **SEC. 11. SUNSET.**

Authority to award new grants under this Act shall terminate not later than 5 fiscal years after the date of enactment unless reauthorized by Congress after review of independent evaluation findings.

## **SEC. 12. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act, subject to annual appropriations and pilot-site limitations established by Congress.

## **11. Formal Submission Channels**

The proposal may be used as a formal discussion draft for outreach to congressional offices, committee staff, state agencies, local workforce entities, philanthropic funders, civic institutions, and potential pilot operators.

### **Recommended channels**

Congressional offices with workforce, education, housing, AI, reentry, youth, rural development, or economic mobility portfolios.

House and Senate committee staff for labor, education, workforce, housing, appropriations, small business, and judiciary/reentry issues.

State workforce agencies and state workforce development boards.

Local workforce development boards and American Job Centers.

Community colleges and registered apprenticeship intermediaries.

City and county leaders focused on homelessness prevention, reentry, workforce development, and economic mobility.

Foundations focused on mobility, youth opportunity, AI transition, housing stability, or workforce pathways.

University research centers capable of designing independent evaluation.

### **Suggested submission note**

I am submitting the attached discussion draft for review and critique. The proposal is not a request for immediate scale. It is a request to pressure-test a limited, rights-protected pilot that could help adults in the Hollow Middle move from instability to independence through paid work, skill-building, emergency stabilization, organizational sponsorship, and independent evaluation.

## **12. Sources Consulted**

[1] U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act overview. The DOL describes WIOA as designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services, and to match employers with skilled workers.

[2] U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program. The DOL describes services for eligible adults, priority for low-income individuals and individuals with basic skills deficiencies, and dislocated workers.

rker services through American Job Centers.

[3] U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. WIOA Youth Formula Program. The program serves eligible youth ages 14-24 with barriers to education, training, and employment and prioritizes out-of-school youth and work experience.

[4] Apprenticeship.gov. Registered Apprenticeship Program. Registered Apprenticeship includes paid work experience with a mentor, progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable nationally recognized credential.

[5] U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. National Dislocated Worker Grant Funding Opportunities. DWGs provide time-limited funding assistance under WIOA Section 170 in response to major economic dislocations or disasters.

[6] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Continuum of Care Program Competition. HUD describes FY 2026 CoC funding as supporting services and housing programs for people experiencing homelessness.

[7] AmeriCorps. Funding Opportunities. AmeriCorps materials describe opportunities for nonprofits, schools, government agencies, faith-based organizations, and community organizations to apply for people power and funding.

Note: This document is a policy concept and discussion draft. It should be reviewed by legislative counsel, labor counsel, civil-rights counsel, public-finance specialists, program operators, participant advocates, and evaluators before formal introduction, funding request, or implementation.