

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To authorize the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to assist local educational agencies with ensuring that each elementary school and secondary school has at least one reading or literacy specialist on staff.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to assist local educational agencies with ensuring that each elementary school and secondary school has at least one reading or literacy specialist on staff.

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 “Literacy Improvement
5 for Transformation Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “elementary
2 school”, “evidence-based”, “institution of higher
3 education”, “local educational agency”, “secondary
4 school”, and “State educational agency” have the
5 meanings given those terms in section 8101 of the
6 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
7 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

8 (2) IDEA TERMS.—The terms “child with a
9 disability”, “individualized education program” or
10 “IEP”, and “specific learning disability” have the
11 meanings given those terms in section 602 of the In-
12 dividuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C.
13 1401).

14 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
15 ty” means—

16 (A) a local educational agency;

17 (B) a partnership between a State edu-
18 cational agency and one or more local edu-
19 cational agencies in the State, entered into for
20 the purposes of a grant under this Act;

21 (C) a nonprofit entity with expertise in
22 structured literacy approaches (including multi-
23 sensory structured language education), reading
24 intervention, or specific learning disabilities (in-
25 cluding dyslexia), in partnership with a State

1 educational agency or one or more local edu-
2 cational agencies;

3 (D) a school operated by the Bureau of In-
4 dian Education or operated by an Indian Tribe,
5 or an organization controlled or sanctioned by
6 an Indian Tribal government, for the children
7 of that Tribe under a contract with, or grant
8 from, the Department of the Interior under the
9 Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 5321
10 et seq.) or the Tribally Controlled Schools Act
11 of 1988 (25 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.); or

12 (E) an institution of higher education (in-
13 cluding a Tribal College or University (as de-
14 fined in section 316(b) of the Higher Education
15 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b))) in partner-
16 ship with a State educational agency or one or
17 more local educational agencies.

18 (4) HIGH-NEED LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
19 CY.—The term “high-need local educational agency”
20 has the meaning given such term in section 200 of
21 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
22 1021).

23 (5) LICENSED PROFESSIONAL.—The term “li-
24 censed professional” means a psychologist, speech-
25 language pathologist, neuropsychologist, or pediatri-

1 cian that is licensed by the State to practice in the
2 applicable field.

3 (6) READING OR LITERACY SPECIALIST.—The
4 term “reading or literacy specialist” means a cer-
5 tified professional—

6 (A) whose primary responsibility is work-
7 ing with students who struggle with reading
8 and writing, including students with dyslexia;

9 (B) who—

10 (i) has completed a certification or
11 training course in literacy (which may in-
12 clude a certification or course that meets
13 accreditation standards described by the
14 International Multisensory Structured
15 Language Education Council); and

16 (ii) is able to demonstrate the ability
17 to implement intervention strategies using
18 structured literacy approaches, including
19 multisensory structured language pro-
20 grams, to improve reading proficiency and
21 literacy skills; and

22 (C) who may also be referred to as an
23 interventionist, a reading teacher, a reading
24 specialist, or by an alternative title.

1 (7) SECTION 504 PLAN.—The term “section 504
2 plan” means a reasonable accommodation developed
3 for students with disabilities to receive the appro-
4 priate educational support services to fully partici-
5 pate in school activities and have equal access to
6 educational opportunities, in accordance with section
7 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.
8 794).

9 (8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
10 the Secretary of Education.

11 **SEC. 3. PURPOSE.**

12 The purpose of this Act is to assist State educational
13 agencies and local educational agencies with ensuring that
14 every elementary school and secondary school has at least
15 one full-time certified reading or literacy specialist on
16 staff, and to support the recruitment, hiring, retention,
17 and development of certified reading or literacy specialists.

18 **SEC. 4. LITERACY IMPROVEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION**

19 **GRANT PROGRAM.**

20 (a) GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
22 a program to award grants, on a competitive basis,
23 to eligible entities to carry out the activities de-
24 scribed under subsection (d).

1 (2) DURATION.—Grants awarded under this
2 section shall be for a period of 5 years.

3 (b) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity desiring a grant
4 under this section shall submit an application to the Sec-
5 retary at such time, in such manner, and containing such
6 information as the Secretary may require, including—

7 (1) a needs assessment of the elementary
8 schools or secondary schools served by the eligible
9 entity that demonstrates the existence of persistent
10 shortages of reading or literacy specialists or per-
11 sistent shortages of full-time reading or literacy spe-
12 cialists;

13 (2) demographic information about the student
14 population of the elementary schools or secondary
15 schools served by the eligible entity, disaggregated
16 (to the extent that such information complies with
17 applicable privacy law and protects personally identi-
18 fiable information), by status as a student that—

19 (A) has a section 504 plan;

20 (B) is not considered “proficient” in read-
21 ing according to the most recent National As-
22 sessment of Educational Progress assessment in
23 reading comprehension for which data is avail-
24 able;

25 (C) has an IEP; or

1 (D) is identified as having been diagnosed
2 by a licensed professional with dyslexia,
3 dysgraphia, dyscalculia, or a specific learning
4 disability;

5 (3) a description of the relevant academic needs
6 of the student population of the elementary schools
7 or secondary schools served by the eligible entity, in-
8 cluding—

9 (A) the ratio of reading and literacy spe-
10 cialists to whole student population; and

11 (B) an overview of student performance re-
12 lated to reading, literacy, and comprehension on
13 formative and summative reading assessments,
14 standardized tests, and district and State
15 benchmarks, including such information
16 disaggregated (to the extent that such informa-
17 tion complies with applicable privacy law and
18 protects personally identifiable information), by
19 status as a student that—

20 (i) has a section 504 plan;

21 (ii) is not considered “proficient” in
22 reading according to the most recent Na-
23 tional Assessment of Educational Progress
24 assessment in reading comprehension for
25 which data is available;

1 (iii) has an IEP; or

2 (iv) is identified as having been diag-
3 nosed by a licensed professional with dys-
4 lexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, or a specific
5 learning disability;

6 (4) graduation rates, attendance data, and dis-
7 ciplinary data (as determined by the Secretary),
8 disaggregated (to the extent that such information
9 complies with applicable privacy law and protects
10 personally identifiable information) by status as a
11 student that—

12 (A) has a section 504 plan;

13 (B) is not considered “proficient” in read-
14 ing according to the most recent National As-
15 sessment of Educational Progress assessment in
16 reading comprehension for which data is avail-
17 able;

18 (C) has an IEP; or

19 (D) is identified as having been diagnosed
20 by a licensed professional with dyslexia,
21 dysgraphia, dyscalculia, or a specific learning
22 disability;

23 (5) a comprehensive plan for the use of grant
24 funds to address persistent shortages described in

1 the needs assessment under paragraph (1), including
2 a description of—

3 (A) how grant funds will be used in ac-
4 cordance with subsection (d);

5 (B) how such activities will improve or
6 strengthen evidence-based intervention strate-
7 gies;

8 (C) how such funds will target early inter-
9 vention in kindergarten through grade 3; and

10 (D) how such funds will be used to ensure
11 that the eligible entity will continue to employ
12 and retain reading or literacy specialists after
13 the completion of the grant period; and

14 (6) an assurance that the eligible entity will en-
15 sure compliance with the requirement described in
16 subsection (e).

17 (c) SELECTION AND PRIORITY.—In awarding grants
18 under this section, the Secretary shall—

19 (1) give a first priority to eligible entities that
20 are located in a State that is in the lowest half of
21 States, in a ranking of all States, ranked in descend-
22 ing order by the percentage of students in grades 4
23 and 8 in the State who score at or above a level of
24 proficient on the most recent National Assessment
25 of Educational Progress reading assessments for

1 students in grades 4 and 8 for which data are avail-
2 able;

3 (2) if the priority in paragraph (1) has been
4 satisfied, or if no applicants described in paragraph
5 (1) apply, then the Secretary shall give priority to
6 applicants that plan to direct grant funding pri-
7 marily to elementary schools; and

8 (3) if the priorities in paragraphs (1) and (2)
9 have been satisfied, or if no applicants described in
10 paragraphs (1) or (2) apply, then the Secretary shall
11 give priority to applicants that are a high-need local
12 educational agency or are a partnership between a
13 State educational agency and a consortium of high-
14 need local educational agencies.

15 (d) ACTIVITIES.—Grant funds awarded under this
16 section shall be used by an eligible entity to carry out one
17 or more of the following activities:

18 (1) Recruiting, hiring, and developing full-time
19 reading or literacy specialists at elementary schools
20 or secondary schools.

21 (2) Providing resources necessary to support
22 the development of reading or literacy specialists
23 from a part-time to full-time capacity at elementary
24 schools or secondary schools served by the eligible
25 entity, including through full funding for teachers

1 who are employed by the eligible entity at the time
2 of the grant to earn an evidence-based reading or lit-
3 eracy specialist certification from an accredited insti-
4 tution of higher education.

5 (3) Supporting the retention of reading or lit-
6 eracy specialists at elementary schools or secondary
7 schools, including by increasing salaries.

8 (4) Ensuring that at least 1 full-time reading or
9 literacy specialist is on staff at each elementary
10 school and secondary school served by the eligible
11 entity.

12 (5) Providing continual professional develop-
13 ment opportunities regarding reading difficulties in
14 students who are children with disabilities at elemen-
15 tary schools or secondary schools, including how to
16 identify dyslexia in students with other diagnoses.

17 (e) REQUIREMENT; RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—

18 (1) REQUIREMENT.—Each grant recipient shall
19 ensure that any reading or literacy specialist whose
20 position is partially or fully funded by grant funds
21 spends not less than 80 percent of their time in that
22 position working with teachers and students to im-
23 prove student outcomes relating to literacy.

1 (2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this
2 Act shall be construed to limit the preservation or
3 use of Native American languages.

4 (f) REPORT.—Each eligible entity awarded a grant
5 under this section shall submit to the Secretary an annual
6 report for each year of the grant award. Such report shall
7 be compiled after a collection of relevant data from ele-
8 mentary schools and secondary schools served by the eligi-
9 ble entity. The report shall include—

10 (1) a summary of the eligible entity's progress
11 in employing at least 1 full-time reading or literacy
12 specialist at each elementary school and secondary
13 school served by the eligible entity;

14 (2) data on the number of full-time and part-
15 time reading or literacy specialists employed at each
16 elementary school and secondary school served by
17 the eligible entity and data on the ratio of students
18 to reading or literacy specialists at each such school;
19 and

20 (3) a summary of any progress made by the eli-
21 gible entity in addressing reading or literacy, as
22 identified in the needs assessment required under
23 subsection (b)(1), as a result of the activities carried
24 out with a grant under this section.