

118TH 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, literacy, or biliteracy specialist on staff.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. HEINRICH 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, literacy, or biliteracy 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 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

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

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

14 (3) BILINGUAL.—The term “bilingual” means a
15 program that makes instructional use of both
16 English and a child’s native language.

17 (4) BILITERACY.—The term “biliteracy” means
18 the ability to read and write with high levels of pro-
19 ficiency in 2 languages through the appropriate and
20 effective use of grammatical, syntactic,
21 graphophonic, semantic, and pragmatic systems of
22 the 2 languages.

23 (5) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
24 ty” means—

25 (A) a local educational agency;

1 (B) a partnership between a State edu-
2 cational agency and one or more local edu-
3 cational agencies in the State, entered into for
4 the purposes of a grant under this section;

5 (C) a nonprofit entity with expertise in
6 reading intervention or specific learning disabil-
7 ities, in partnership with a State educational
8 agency or one or more local educational agen-
9 cies;

10 (D) a school operated by the Bureau of In-
11 dian Education or operated by an Indian tribe,
12 or an organization controlled or sanctioned by
13 an Indian tribal government, for the children of
14 that tribe under a contract with, or grant from,
15 the Department of the Interior under the In-
16 dian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 5321 et
17 seq.) or the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of
18 1988 (25 U.S.C. 2501 et seq.); or

19 (E) an institution of higher education (in-
20 cluding a Tribal College or University (as de-
21 fined in section 316 of the Higher Education
22 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c)).

23 (6) ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT.—The
24 term “English language development” means in-
25 struction designed specifically for English language

1 learners to develop their listening, speaking, reading,
2 and writing skills in English. English language de-
3 velopment instruction may include English as a Sec-
4 ond Language, English for Speakers of Other Lan-
5 guages, English as a New Language, English Lan-
6 guage Learner instruction, and English Learner in-
7 struction.

8 (7) HIGH-NEED LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
9 CY.—The term “high-need local educational agency”
10 has the meaning given such term in section 200 of
11 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
12 1021).

13 (8) READING, LITERACY, OR BILITERACY SPE-
14 CIALIST.—The term “reading, literacy, or biliteracy
15 specialist” means a certified professional—

16 (A) whose primary responsibility is work-
17 ing with students who struggle with reading
18 and writing;

19 (B) who has completed additional certifi-
20 cations or course of study and is able to dem-
21 onstrate the ability to implement intervention
22 strategies for the building of reading and lit-
23 eracy or biliteracy skills; and

1 (C) who may also be referred to as an
2 interventionist, reading teacher, or by an alter-
3 native title.

4 (9) SECTION 504 PLAN.—The term “section 504
5 plan” means a reasonable accommodation developed
6 for students with disabilities to receive the appro-
7 priate educational support services to fully partici-
8 pate in school activities and have equal access to
9 educational opportunities, in accordance with section
10 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.
11 794).

12 (10) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”
13 means the Secretary of Education.

14 (11) SUBGROUP OF STUDENTS.—The term
15 “subgroup of students” means—

16 (A) each major racial and ethnic group;

17 (B) economically disadvantaged students
18 as compared to students who are not economi-
19 cally disadvantaged;

20 (C) children with disabilities as compared
21 to children without disabilities;

22 (D) English proficiency status; and

23 (E) gender.

1 **SEC. 3. PURPOSE.**

2 The purpose of this Act is to assist State educational
3 agencies and local educational agencies with ensuring that
4 every elementary school and secondary school has at least
5 one full-time certified reading, literacy, or biliteracy spe-
6 cialist on staff, and to support the recruitment, hiring, re-
7 tention, and development of certified reading, literacy, or
8 biliteracy specialists.

9 **SEC. 4. FINDINGS.**

10 Congress finds the following:

11 (1) According to the Annie E. Casey Founda-
12 tion, children who struggle to read proficiently by
13 fourth grade are 4 times more likely to not graduate
14 from high school than their peers with grade-level
15 reading skills.

16 (2) According to the 2022 National Assessment
17 of Educational Progress, 33 percent of fourth grad-
18 ers and 31 percent of eighth graders scored at or
19 above proficient in English reading. In 2019, 37 per-
20 cent of twelfth graders scored at or above proficient
21 in English reading.

22 (3) In 2022, 66 percent of fourth graders and
23 69 percent of eighth graders scored at or below the
24 National Assessment of Educational Progress Basic
25 English reading level.

1 (2) demographic information about the student
2 population served by the eligible entity,
3 disaggregated (to the extent that such information
4 complies with applicable privacy law and protects
5 personally identifiable information), by—

6 (A) subgroups of students and grade level;

7 and

8 (B) status as a student that—

9 (i) has a section 504 plan;

10 (ii) has an IEP; and

11 (iii) is an English learner;

12 (3) a description of the relevant academic needs
13 of the student population served by the eligible enti-
14 ty, including—

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

17 (B) an overview of student performance re-
18 lated to reading, literacy, and comprehension on
19 formative and summative reading assessments,
20 standardized tests, and district and State
21 benchmarks, including such information
22 disaggregated (to the extent that such informa-
23 tion complies with applicable privacy law and
24 protects personally identifiable information),
25 by—

1 (i) subgroups of students and grade
2 level; and

3 (ii) status as a student that—

4 (I) has a section 504 plan;

5 (II) has an IEP; and

6 (III) is an English learner;

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

12 (A) subgroups of students and grade level;

13 and

14 (B) status as a student that—

15 (i) has a section 504 plan;

16 (ii) has an IEP; and

17 (iii) is an English learner;

18 (5) a comprehensive plan for the use of grant
19 funds to address persistent shortages described in
20 the needs assessment under paragraph (1), including
21 a description of—

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

24 (B) how such activities will improve or
25 strengthen intervention strategies; and

1 (C) how such funds will be used to ensure
2 that the eligible entity will continue to employ
3 and retain reading, literacy, or biliteracy special-
4 ists after the completion of the grant period;

5 (6) a description of how the eligible entity will
6 prioritize recruiting individuals from the commu-
7 nities served by the eligible entity and from under-
8 represented populations in the field of education (as
9 determined by the Secretary by regulation) to serve
10 as full-time reading, literacy, or biliteracy specialists,
11 and how the eligible entity will track progress in
12 meeting any specified hiring goals;

13 (7) an assurance that the eligible entity will en-
14 sure compliance with the requirement described in
15 subsection (e);

16 (8) a description of how the eligible entity is
17 meeting the literacy and second language acquisition
18 needs of English learners through English language
19 development, English as a Second Language, or bi-
20 lingual program offerings;

21 (9) an assurance that the second language de-
22 velopment needs of English learners will not result
23 in English learners being placed in remedial reading
24 courses; and

1 (10) an assurance that Native American
2 English learners whose home language is orally
3 based are not disadvantaged when those English
4 learners begin to learn English, especially by pro-
5 viding an assurance of culturally and linguistically
6 responsive, engaging, and evidence-based strategies
7 that promote student success.

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

10 (1) give a first priority to eligible entities that
11 are located in a State that is in the lowest quartile
12 of States, in a ranking of all States, ranked in de-
13 scending order by the percentage of students in
14 grades 4 and 8 in the State who score at or above
15 a level of Proficient on the National Assessment of
16 Educational Progress reading assessments for stu-
17 dents in grades 4 and 8; and

18 (2) if the priority in paragraph (1) has been
19 satisfied, or if no applicants described in paragraph
20 (1) apply, then the Secretary shall give priority to
21 applicants that—

22 (A) are a high-need local educational agen-
23 cy, or are a partnership between a State edu-
24 cational agency and a consortium of high-need
25 local educational agencies; and

1 (B) describe and set specific hiring goals
2 towards increasing the share of reading, lit-
3 eracy, or biliteracy specialists who are from
4 underrepresented populations in the field of
5 education.

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

9 (1) Recruiting, hiring, and developing full-time
10 reading, literacy, or biliteracy specialists.

11 (2) Providing resources necessary to support
12 the development of reading, literacy, or biliteracy
13 specialists from a part-time to full-time capacity at
14 elementary schools or secondary schools served by
15 the eligible entity, including through full funding for
16 teachers who are employed by the eligible entity at
17 the time of the grant to earn an evidence-based
18 reading, literacy, or biliteracy specialist certification
19 from an accredited institution of higher education.

20 (3) Supporting the retention of reading, lit-
21 eracy, or biliteracy specialists, including by increas-
22 ing salaries.

23 (4) Ensuring that at least 1 full-time reading,
24 literacy, or biliteracy specialist is on staff at each el-

1 elementary school and secondary school served by the
2 eligible entity.

3 (5) Supporting biliteracy development, teaching,
4 and assessment strategies.

5 (6) Providing continual professional develop-
6 ment opportunities regarding reading difficulties in
7 students with disabilities, including how to identify
8 reading disabilities in students with other diagnoses.

9 (e) REQUIREMENT; RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—

10 (1) REQUIREMENT.—Each grant recipient shall
11 ensure that any reading, literacy, or biliteracy spe-
12 cialist whose position is partially or fully funded by
13 grant funds spends not less than 80 percent of their
14 time in that position working with teachers and stu-
15 dents to improve student outcomes.

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

19 (f) REPORT.—Each eligible entity awarded a grant
20 under this section shall submit to the Secretary an annual
21 report for each year of the grant award. Such report shall
22 include—

23 (1) a summary of the eligible entity's progress
24 in employing at least 1 full-time reading, literacy, or

1 biliteracy specialist at each elementary school and
2 secondary school served by the eligible entity;

3 (2) data on the number of full-time and part-
4 time reading, literacy, or biliteracy specialists,
5 disaggregated by major racial and ethnic groups and
6 gender, employed at each elementary school and sec-
7 ondary school served by the eligible entity, and data
8 on the ratio of students to reading, literacy, or
9 biliteracy specialists at each such school;

10 (3) a summary of any progress made by the eli-
11 gible entity in addressing reading, literacy, and com-
12 prehension, as identified in the needs assessment re-
13 quired under subsection (b)(2), as a result of the ac-
14 tivities carried out with a grant under this section;
15 and

16 (4) a summary of the number of students in
17 each subgroup of students who were served by the
18 reading, literacy, or biliteracy specialist (to the ex-
19 tent that such information complies with applicable
20 privacy law and protects personally identifiable in-
21 formation).