

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2021

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 10, 2025

Ms. WILSON of Florida (for herself, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. BROWN, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. CARSON, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. CASTEN, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. CHU, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. DELUZIO, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. EVANS of Pennsylvania, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Mr. FROST, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mrs. HAYES, Ms. NORTON, Ms. HOYLE of Oregon, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE, Mr. KEATING, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. LANDSMAN, Mr. LIEU, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. MAGAZINER, Mrs. MCBATH, Mr. McGOVERN, Mrs. McIVER, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. MENG, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MOSKOWITZ, Mr. MRVAN, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. NEGUSE, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Ms. OMAR, Ms. PEREZ, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. POCAN, Ms. PRESSLEY, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. ROSS, Ms. SALINAS, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. SCHOLTEN, Ms. SEWELL, Ms. SHERRILL, Mr. SORENSEN, Ms. STEVENS, Mrs. SYKES, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. THANEDAR, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. TOKUDA, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, and Mr. FITZPATRICK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

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## A BILL

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, and for other purposes.

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 “American Teacher  
5       Act”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds the following:

8               (1) Teachers are the backbone of our nation,  
9       from the first bell to the last bell, they act as care-  
10      givers, counselors, role models, advocates, and cheer-  
11      leaders, helping children achieve their greatest po-  
12      tential.

13              (2) What is more, teacher shortages are among  
14      the most pressing threats to education access today,  
15      with districts across the country forced to radically  
16      adjust school offerings to respond to turnover and  
17      prolonged vacancies. Every day, stories surface of  
18      schools shortening their weeks, canceling courses, in-  
19      creasing student-teacher ratios, and placing under-  
20      prepared or temporary substitute staff in core in-  
21      structional roles. Such adjustments disrupt learning,  
22      take a sustained toll on teacher morale, and harm  
23      student achievement.

24              (3) The teacher wage penalty, characterizing  
25      lower weekly wages and overall compensation for

1 teachers compared to college-educated peers in other  
2 professions, hit an all-time high of 23.5 percent in  
3 2021 and continues to demonstrate significant, ad-  
4 verse impacts on teacher recruitment and retention.  
5 According to a recent report by the Teacher Salary  
6 Project, over 90 percent of teachers believe low sal-  
7 ary contributes to shortages in their communities  
8 and over 45 percent believe their salary is insuffi-  
9 cient for medium and long-term career sustain-  
10 ability.

11 (4) Significant numbers of teachers report  
12 maintaining multiple jobs to make ends meet or  
13 being able to work in their profession only through  
14 the support of a partner's higher-paying job. This  
15 instability is worse for teachers of color who are  
16 more likely to work in under-resourced schools. As  
17 a result, high-poverty communities face a com-  
18 pounded burden.

19 (5) In August of 2022, the White House issued  
20 a fact sheet renewing attention to the weak teacher  
21 pipeline and calling upon legislators to use federal,  
22 state, and local resources to strengthen teaching ca-  
23 reer pathways and ensure competitive, livable wages.  
24 This statement accompanies efforts by twenty-five

1 states to propose and enact legislation addressing  
2 teacher compensation since January 2021.

3 (6) To restore stability in our schools and se-  
4 cure equitable access to high-quality education, we  
5 must raise awareness surrounding the value of  
6 teaching as a profession and provide compensation  
7 that reflects this value.

8 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO SUPPORT STATE EFFORTS TO IN-**  
9 **CREASE TEACHER SALARIES.**

10 (a) TEACHER SALARY INCENTIVE GRANTS.—

11 (1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is  
12 to ensure that each teacher who is employed full-  
13 time at a qualifying school in a State earns an an-  
14 nual salary for any year of employment of not less  
15 than \$60,000 (adjusted for inflation).

16 (2) GRANTS FOR MINIMUM SALARY THRESH-  
17 OLD.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made  
19 available to carry out this section, the Secretary  
20 of Education shall award 4-year grants to State  
21 educational agencies.

22 (B) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to re-  
23 ceive such a grant, the State educational agency  
24 shall submit an application to the Secretary at  
25 such time, in such manner, and containing such

1 information as the Secretary may require, in-  
2 cluding—

3 (i) the plan required under subpara-  
4 graph (C); and

5 (ii) the assurances required under  
6 subparagraph (D).

7 (C) SUSTAINABILITY PLAN.—The Sec-  
8 retary shall require a State educational agency  
9 submitting an application under subparagraph  
10 (B) to provide a plan that demonstrates how,  
11 following the conclusion of the 4-year grant pe-  
12 riod, such agency will continue to maintain and  
13 adjust the annual base minimum salary in ac-  
14 cordance with subsection (b).

15 (D) REQUIRED ASSURANCES.—The Sec-  
16 retary shall require a State educational agency  
17 submitting an application under subparagraph  
18 (B) to provide an assurance in such application  
19 that—

20 (i) if necessary to achieve the purpose  
21 of this section, the State will enact and en-  
22 force legislation to establish a statewide  
23 teacher salary schedule or otherwise to es-  
24 tablish minimum teacher salary require-  
25 ments;

1           (ii) each teacher described in para-  
2 graph (1) will be compensated on a salary  
3 basis at an annual rate per school year  
4 that is not less than the salary threshold  
5 described in subsection (b);

6           (iii) each teacher who is employed  
7 part-time at a qualifying school in a State  
8 will be compensated on a salary basis at an  
9 annual rate per school year that is not less  
10 than the salary threshold described in sub-  
11 section (b), proportionately reduced in ac-  
12 cordance with the number of hours worked  
13 by such teacher;

14           (iv) priority will be given to local edu-  
15 cational agencies in accordance with sub-  
16 paragraph (E)(ii); and

17           (v) the State educational agency will,  
18 upon request by the Secretary, carry out  
19 the compliance demonstration in accord-  
20 ance with subsection (c)(3).

21 (E) SUBGRANTS.—

22           (i) IN GENERAL.—A State educational  
23 agency awarded a grant under this section  
24 shall use not less than 85 percent of the  
25 grant funds to award subgrants to local

educational agencies to carry out the purpose of this section.

(ii) PRIORITY.—The State educational agency, in allocating funds to local educational agencies under this section, shall give priority to local educational agencies—

(I) serving greater numbers or percentages of elementary or secondary schools receiving funds under title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.); or

(II) with respect to which all of the schools served by the local educational agency are designated with a locale code of 41, 42, or 43, as determined by the Secretary.

(b) SALARY THRESHOLD.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For school year 2026–2027, the base minimum salary dollar amount shall be \$60,000.

(2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—For school year 2026–2027 and each succeeding school year, the dollar amount referred to in paragraph (1) shall be

1 deemed to refer to the dollar amount calculated  
2 under this subsection for the preceding school year,  
3 increased by a percentage equal to the annual per-  
4 centage increase in the Consumer Price Index for All  
5 Urban Consumers published by the Department of  
6 Labor for the most recent calendar year.

7 (3) NO SALARY LIMIT.—The base minimum sal-  
8 ary dollar amount may be greater than the dollar  
9 amount described in paragraphs (1) or (2).

10 (c) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Grant funds received under  
12 this section shall be used to supplement and not  
13 supplant other Federal, State, and local public funds  
14 that would, in the absence of such Federal funds, be  
15 made available for teacher base salaries.

16 (2) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—A State edu-  
17 cational agency or local educational agency shall not  
18 reduce or adjust any teacher pay or State teacher  
19 loan forgiveness program due to the eligibility of  
20 teachers within the jurisdiction of such agency for  
21 pay supplementation under this section.

22 (3) COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION TO SEC-  
23 RETARY.—Each State educational agency and local  
24 educational agency, upon request by the Secretary,  
25 shall demonstrate that the methodology used to allo-



1       cate teacher pay and State teacher loan forgiveness  
2       (if applicable) to teachers and qualifying schools en-  
3       sures that each such teacher and school receives the  
4       same State and local funds for teacher compensation  
5       it would receive if this Act had not been enacted.

6   **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER SALARIES.**

7       (a) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made available to  
8       carry out this section, the Secretary of Education shall  
9       award grants to eligible State educational agencies to pro-  
10      vide, in accordance with subsection (c), cost-of-living ad-  
11      justments to the annual base salary of such State and the  
12      annual salary of each teacher who is employed full-time  
13      at a qualifying school in such State.

14      (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive such a  
15      grant, the State educational agency shall submit an appli-  
16      cation to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and  
17      containing such information as the Secretary may require,  
18      including the demonstration required under subsection  
19      (d)(2).

20      (c) ADJUSTMENT.—The annual base salary of the  
21      State and the annual salary of each teacher described in  
22      subsection (a) shall be increased by a percentage equal to  
23      the annual percentage increase in the Consumer Price  
24      Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Depart-  
25      ment of Labor for the most recent calendar year.

1 (d) ELIGIBLE STATE DEFINED.—In this section, the  
 2 term “eligible State” means a State—

3 (1) with an annual base salary of not less than  
 4 \$60,000 for teachers who are employed full-time at  
 5 a qualifying school; and

6 (2) that demonstrates in the application sub-  
 7 mitted under subsection (b) that, due to inflation,  
 8 such State is unable to adjust such base salary or  
 9 the annual salaries of such teachers for cost-of-liv-  
 10 ing.

11 **SEC. 5. ENHANCED AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF TEACH-**  
 12 **ING PROFESSION.**

13 The Secretary may reserve not more than 4 percent  
 14 of the funds appropriated under section 8 to carry out a  
 15 national campaign—

16 (1) to increase awareness about the importance  
 17 of teachers and the value of the teaching profession;

18 (2) to encourage secondary school and college  
 19 students to consider teaching as a professional ca-  
 20 reer; and

21 (3) to diversify the pool of individuals who enter  
 22 the teaching profession.

23 **SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

24 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to alter or oth-  
 25 erwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures afforded

1 to school or local educational agency employees under Fed-  
2 eral, State, or local laws (including applicable regulations,  
3 court orders, or requirements that local educational agen-  
4 cies negotiate or meet and confer in good faith) or under  
5 the terms of collective bargaining agreements, memoranda  
6 of understanding, or other agreements between such em-  
7 ployers and their employees.

8 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

9 In this Act:

10 (1) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “elemen-  
11 tary school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary  
12 school”, “Secretary”, “State”, and “State edu-  
13 cational agency” have the meanings given such  
14 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-  
15 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

16 (2) QUALIFYING SCHOOL.—The term “quali-  
17 fying school” means, with respect to any school year,  
18 a public elementary school or a public secondary  
19 school.

20 (3) TEACHER.—The term “teacher” means an  
21 individual who—

22 (A) is a teacher of record who provides di-  
23 rect classroom teaching (or classroom-type  
24 teaching in a nonclassroom setting) in a quali-  
25 fying school for not less than the normal or

1 statutory number of hours of work for a full-  
2 time or part-time teacher over a complete  
3 school year (as determined by the State in  
4 which the school is located);

5 (B) meets the applicable requirements for  
6 State certification or licensure, as applicable, in  
7 the State in which such school is located and in  
8 the subject area in which the individual is the  
9 teacher of record; and

10 (C) possesses skills and knowledge needed  
11 for effective classroom practice, including with  
12 respect to demonstrating the ability to improve  
13 student learning.

14 (4) TEACHER OF RECORD.—The term “teacher  
15 of record” means a teacher who has—

16 (A) been assigned the responsibility for  
17 specified pupils’ learning in a grade, subject, or  
18 course as reflected on the school’s official  
19 record of attendance;

20 (B) learned and developed extensive teach-  
21 ing and basic classroom management skills; and

22 (C) demonstrated the ability to plan and  
23 deliver instruction to students from different  
24 cultural backgrounds and with different learn-

1           ing styles and to assess and support student  
2           learning.

3 **SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

4           There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
5 this Act such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years  
6 2026 through 2030.

