

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5796

To establish a grant program for certain institutions of higher education to plan and implement projects for economic and community development in economically distressed communities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 21, 2025

Mr. COSTA (for himself and Mr. WESTERMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a grant program for certain institutions of higher education to plan and implement projects for economic and community development in economically distressed communities, 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 “Boosting University
5 Investments in Low-Income Districts Act” or the
6 “BUILD Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish
3 a program to award grants to institutions of higher edu-
4 cation designated under subsection (b) to plan and imple-
5 ment eligible projects for economic and community devel-
6 opment in economically distressed communities.

7 (b) DESIGNATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER
8 EDUCATION.—

9 (1) LIST OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDU-
10 CATION.—The Secretary shall develop a list of every
11 institution of higher education that the Secretary de-
12 termines is located in a distressed community, in ac-
13 cordance with the criteria described in paragraph
14 (2).

15 (2) DISTRESSED COMMUNITY CRITERIA.—The
16 Secretary shall determine that an institution of high-
17 er education is located in a distressed community if
18 one of the following circumstances applies to such
19 institution:

20 (A) In the case of an institution of higher
21 education that is located in a metropolitan or a
22 micropolitan statistical area, as defined by the
23 Office of Management and Budget, and in a
24 State in which the median family income is
25 higher than the national median family income,
26 the institution of higher education is located in

1 a ZIP Code in which the median family income
2 is at least 25 percent lower than the median
3 family income for such State.

4 (B) In the case of an institution of higher
5 education that is located in a metropolitan or a
6 micropolitan statistical area, as defined by the
7 Office of Management and Budget, and in a
8 State in which the median family income is
9 lower than the national median family income,
10 the institution of higher education is located in
11 a Zip Code in which the median family income
12 is at least 25 percent lower than the national
13 median family income.

14 (C) In the case of an institution of higher
15 education that is not located in a metropolitan
16 or micropolitan statistical area and is located in
17 a State in which the median family income is
18 higher than the national median family income,
19 the institution of higher education is located in
20 a county in which the median family income is
21 at least 25 percent lower than the median fam-
22 ily income for such State.

23 (D) In the case of an institution of higher
24 education that is not located in a metropolitan
25 or micropolitan statistical area and is located in

1 a State in which the median family income is
2 lower than the national median family income,
3 the institution of higher education is located in
4 a county in which the median family income is
5 at least 25 percent lower than the national me-
6 dian family income.

7 (3) DESIGNATION.—

8 (A) NOTIFICATION TO INSTITUTIONS OF
9 HIGHER EDUCATION.—Upon development of the
10 list of institutions of higher education located in
11 a distressed community under paragraph (1),
12 the Secretary shall notify each institution of
13 higher education that is included in such list
14 that such institution may be designated under
15 this paragraph to receive a planning grant and
16 an implementation grant under this section.

17 (B) NOTIFICATION TO SECRETARY.—An
18 institution of higher education that receives a
19 notification from the Secretary under subpara-
20 graph (A) that intends to receive a planning
21 grant and an implementation grant under this
22 section shall submit to the Secretary a notifica-
23 tion of such intent in such form and at such
24 time as the Secretary determines appropriate.

1 (C) GRANT ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary
2 shall designate each institution of higher edu-
3 cation that submits a notification under sub-
4 paragraph (B) as eligible to receive a planning
5 grant and an implementation grant under this
6 section.

7 (c) PLANNING GRANTS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide
9 a grant to each institution of higher education des-
10 ignated under subsection (b) for such institution to
11 develop an implementation plan describing—

12 (A) the eligible projects that such institu-
13 tion intends to carry out with an implementa-
14 tion grant under subsection (d); and

15 (B) how such projects will support eco-
16 nomic and community revitalization in the com-
17 munity in which such institution is located.

18 (2) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—

19 (A) IN GENERAL.—A recipient of a plan-
20 ning grant under this subsection shall complete
21 the implementation plan required under para-
22 graph (1) not later than 2 years after the date
23 on which the Secretary provides a planning
24 grant to such recipient.

1 (B) APPROVAL.—Upon completion of an
2 implementation plan with a planning grant pro-
3 vided under this subsection, the Secretary shall
4 review such plan for approval.

5 (3) GRANT AMOUNTS.—

6 (A) GRANT TERM.—The Secretary may
7 distribute funds for a grant provided under this
8 subsection for a period of not more than 2
9 years.

10 (B) TOTAL GRANT AMOUNTS.—Each grant
11 awarded under this subsection shall be in an
12 amount that does not exceed \$100,000 for each
13 year of the grant term.

14 (C) ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS.—

15 (i) APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL
16 GRANT FUNDS.—Not later than 1 year
17 after grant funds are first awarded under
18 subparagraph (A), a grant recipient may
19 submit to the Secretary an application to
20 receive additional funds to complete the
21 implementation plan required under para-
22 graph (1).

23 (ii) DEADLINE TO RECEIVE ADDI-
24 TIONAL GRANT FUNDS.—Not later than 90
25 days after a grant recipient submits an ap-

1 plication for additional grant funds under
2 clause (i), the Secretary shall determine
3 whether to award additional grant funds to
4 such recipient and shall distribute such ad-
5 ditional grant funds to such recipient.

6 (D) FORMULA.—The Secretary shall estab-
7 lish a formula by which the Secretary shall dis-
8 tribute funds for each grant under this sub-
9 section in accordance with this paragraph.

10 (d) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Upon approval of an imple-
12 mentation plan under subsection (c)(2), the Sec-
13 retary shall provide a grant to the institution of
14 higher education to carry out eligible projects de-
15 scribed in such plan.

16 (2) GRANT TERM.—The term of a grant pro-
17 vided under this subsection shall be 5 years.

18 (3) GRANT AMOUNTS.—The Secretary shall es-
19 tablish a formula by which the Secretary shall dis-
20 tribute funds for each grant under this subsection in
21 accordance with the following requirements:

22 (A) The Secretary shall provide each re-
23 cipient of a grant under this subsection with a
24 grant in an amount that is not less than
25 \$25,000,000 and not more than \$50,000,000.

1 (B) The Secretary shall distribute funds
2 for each grant under this subsection at least
3 once during each year of the grant term.

4 (4) USE OF FUNDS.—A recipient of a grant
5 under this subsection may only use such grant to
6 carry out an eligible project in the distressed com-
7 munity in which such recipient is located, as deter-
8 mined by the Secretary under subsection (b)(2).

9 (5) REPORT REQUIRED.—At least once each
10 year during the term of a grant provided under this
11 subsection, a recipient of such grant shall submit to
12 the Secretary a report describing the activities for
13 which such grant was used during such year.

14 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

15 (1) ELIGIBLE PROJECT.—The term “eligible
16 project” means a project that will spur economic de-
17 velopment in the community in which such project is
18 carried out, including a project to—

19 (A) renovate, construct, or maintain build-
20 ings that will benefit and be accessible to the
21 community, including—

22 (i) commercial buildings located on
23 the campus of the institution of higher
24 education carrying out the project;

1 (ii) housing for students, faculty,
2 staff, or members of the community;

3 (iii) cultural institutions such as mu-
4 seums, theaters, and arts centers; and

5 (iv) facilities such as laboratories or
6 libraries;

7 (B) establish programs, hosted by the in-
8 stitution of higher education carrying out the
9 project, that provide seed money to early-stage
10 companies for small business development;

11 (C) develop and fund apprenticeships,
12 hosted by the institution of higher education
13 carrying out the project, in local industries to
14 decrease unemployment in the community;

15 (D) build and maintain municipal
16 broadband networks and related infrastructure
17 for the institution of higher education that is
18 carrying out the project and the community;

19 (E) build and maintain health clinics ac-
20 cessible to the public on or near the campus of
21 the institution of higher education that is car-
22 rying out the project;

23 (F) establish programs at local health clin-
24 ics to educate, recruit, and train members of

1 the community to become healthcare profes-
2 sionals;

3 (G) establish partnerships between the in-
4 stitution of higher education carrying out the
5 project and local school districts to provide—

6 (i) graduate student teaching support;

7 (ii) administrative support to such
8 school districts; and

9 (iii) access to facilities of such institu-
10 tion of higher education to local elementary
11 and secondary schools; and

12 (H) fund research on the campus of the in-
13 stitution of higher education carrying out the
14 project that is relevant to the economic needs of
15 the community.

16 (2) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

17 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “institution
18 of higher education” means an institution of
19 higher education (as defined in section 101(a)
20 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
21 U.S.C. 1001(a))), including an institution of
22 higher education established under the Morrill
23 Act of 1890 (7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.), that—

1 (i) offers more than 50 percent of
2 such institution's courses by correspond-
3 ence; and

4 (ii) enrolls 50 percent or more of the
5 institution's students in correspondence
6 courses.

7 (B) EXCLUSION.—The term “institution of
8 higher education” does not include an institu-
9 tion of higher education that—

10 (i) is an institution of higher edu-
11 cation established under the Morrill Act of
12 1862 (7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.);

13 (ii) has very high research activity
14 status, as designated by the Carnegie Clas-
15 sification of Institutions of Higher Edu-
16 cation; or

17 (iii) is a service academy.

18 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
19 the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the As-
20 sistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Devel-
21 opment.

22 (4) SERVICE ACADEMY.—The term “service
23 academy” means the following:

24 (A) The United States Military Academy.

25 (B) The United States Naval Academy.

1 (C) The United States Air Force Academy.

2 (D) The United States Coast Guard Acad-

3 emy.

4 (E) The United States Merchant Marine

5 Academy.

6 (F) Any college or university designated by

7 the Secretary of Defense as a military college.

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