

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4025

To support the preparation and retention of outstanding educators in all fields to ensure a bright future for children and youth in under-resourced and underserved communities in the United States, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 9, 2026

Ms. SMITH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To support the preparation and retention of outstanding educators in all fields to ensure a bright future for children and youth in under-resourced and underserved communities in the United States, 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 “Addressing Teacher
5 Shortages Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Currently, there are not enough teachers to
2 meet the demand for teachers in all locations and in
3 all fields, creating a teacher shortage. The teacher
4 shortage is a result of growing student enrollment,
5 shrinking pupil-teacher ratios, declining enrollment
6 in teacher preparation programs, and high levels of
7 attrition from the field. Teacher shortages are par-
8 ticularly acute in rural schools and in certain subject
9 areas, such as the fields of STEM, special education,
10 and English as a second language. Additionally,
11 there is a lack of racial diversity in the teaching
12 workforce.

13 (2) Rural schools serve 18 percent of all stu-
14 dents in the United States, including over 9,000,000
15 students in rural public elementary and secondary
16 schools. More than 40 percent of all small, rural
17 local educational agencies in the United States
18 struggle with adequately staffing their schools.
19 These personnel shortages include difficulties both in
20 recruiting and retaining educators. Shortages are es-
21 pecially pronounced in special education and STEM
22 fields, when compared to urban teacher labor mar-
23 kets.

24 (3) Rural communities face unique challenges
25 in recruiting and retaining teachers for reasons such

1 as funding, limited teacher supply, and geographic
2 isolation. Rural schools often experience difficulty
3 hiring and high turnover due to inadequate re-
4 sources, lower salaries, and poor working conditions.

5 (4) The demand for teachers is going unmet in
6 some subject areas more so than others. In 2017–
7 2018, 48 States reported shortages in mathematics,
8 46 in special education, 43 in science, 41 in foreign
9 language, and 31 in English as a second language.

10 (5) Although the share of teachers of color has
11 been increasing, there is a gap in racial diversity be-
12 tween teachers of color who comprise 20 percent of
13 the teacher workforce and students of color who ac-
14 count for 50 percent of students.

15 (6) Data from the 2015–2016 National Teacher
16 and Principal Survey show that millennial teachers
17 are less likely to be racially diverse than the previous
18 generation of Generation X teachers, suggesting that
19 racial diversity in the teaching workforce could be
20 declining in the future.

21 (7) Research shows that better prepared teach-
22 ers stay longer in the profession and are more effec-
23 tive in improving student achievement. For example,
24 an analysis of the nationally representative Schools
25 and Staffing Survey found that new recruits who

1 had a semester or more of practice teaching prior to
2 employment were more than 3 times less likely to
3 leave teaching after a year than those who had no
4 practice teaching.

5 (8) Data from the 2012–2013 Schools and
6 Staffing Survey show that the attrition rate for
7 teachers is approximately 8 percent. It was higher
8 for rural teachers, at 8.4 percent, than for suburban
9 and urban teachers, at 7.3 and 7.9 percent, respec-
10 tively. This high attrition rate is costly for local edu-
11 cational agencies, with the savings of replacing high-
12 er-earning, more experienced teachers mitigated by
13 replacement costs.

14 (9) High-quality mentoring and induction pro-
15 grams can offer support to teacher candidates and
16 novice teachers throughout the teacher preparation
17 and school placement experience, improving the like-
18 lihood that they will complete the training and cer-
19 tification process and remain in the profession. Evi-
20 dence-based mentoring and induction programs have
21 been shown to increase retention, accelerate the pro-
22 fessional learning of novice teachers, and improve
23 student achievement.

24 (10) Teacher residencies create long-term bene-
25 fits for local educational agencies, schools, and stu-

1 dents. Research suggests that residencies bring
 2 greater gender and racial diversity into the teaching
 3 workforce and have significantly higher retention
 4 rates for graduates than traditional preparation pro-
 5 grams.

6 (11) Grow Your Own teacher preparation mod-
 7 els provide a promising solution for hard-to-staff
 8 schools, such as those in rural communities. These
 9 models help to recruit graduates of local schools and
 10 members of the school’s community into the teach-
 11 ing profession.

12 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

13 In this Act:

14 (1) GENERAL ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms
 15 “dual or concurrent enrollment program”, “elemen-
 16 tary school”, “local educational agency”, and “sec-
 17 ondary school” have the meanings given the terms
 18 in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary
 19 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

20 (2) 2+2 PROGRAM.—The term “2+2 program”
 21 means a partnership between a junior or community
 22 college, as defined in section 312 of the Higher Edu-
 23 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1058), and a 4-year
 24 degree-granting institution of higher education in
 25 which teacher candidates can begin teacher prepara-

1 tion in the junior or community college and fully
2 transfer their credits to the 4-year institution of
3 higher education, where the students complete their
4 teacher preparation.

5 (3) CERTIFIED TEACHER.—The term “certified
6 teacher” means an individual who possesses a docu-
7 ment certifying that the individual has met the full
8 requirements of a State for employment as a teacher
9 in the public schools of that State.

10 (4) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
11 ty” means a local educational agency (including an
12 entity described in subparagraph (B), (C), (D), or
13 (E) of section 8101(30) of the Elementary and Sec-
14 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
15 7801(30))) or a consortium of such agencies.

16 (5) GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM.—The term
17 “Grow Your Own program” means a program that
18 works to recruit graduates of local schools and mem-
19 bers of the school’s community into the teaching
20 profession of a school.

21 (6) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNI-
22 VERSITY.—The term “historically Black college or
23 university” has the meaning given the term “part B
24 institution” under section 322 of the Higher Edu-
25 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

1 (7) INDUCTION PROGRAM.—The term “induc-
2 tion program” has the meaning given the term in
3 section 200(14) of the Higher Education Act of
4 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1021(14)), except that—

5 (A) the high-quality and structured teacher
6 mentoring component described in subpara-
7 graph (A) of such section shall be led by a
8 qualified mentor who teaches in the same or
9 similar field, grade, or subject as the mentee;

10 (B) the opportunities for new teachers de-
11 scribed in subparagraph (D) of such section
12 shall include opportunities for observation of,
13 and feedback from, teacher mentors, faculty,
14 and researchers;

15 (C) the faculty included in the program, as
16 described in subparagraph (F) of such section,
17 shall also model personalized instruction;

18 (D) the interdisciplinary collaboration de-
19 scribed in subparagraph (G) of such section
20 shall include preparation regarding the develop-
21 ment, analysis, and use of formative, interim,
22 and summative assessments;

23 (E) the assistance provided under subpara-
24 graph (H) of such section with respect to stu-
25 dent achievement data shall also include assist-

ance with understanding classroom engagement data (such as attendance and discipline rates and other measures of school climate), and with understanding the applicability of both types of data to classroom instruction and design; and

(F) the observation and evaluation opportunities under subparagraph (I) of such section shall be conducted in order to inform efforts to support new teachers and improve their practice.

(8) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The term “institution of higher education” has the meaning given the term in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

(9) QUALIFIED MENTOR TEACHER.—The term “qualified mentor teacher” means an educator who—

(A) meets a minimum set of qualification standards based in part on State-determined measures of teacher effectiveness; and

(B) is selected by the grantee to—

(i) host a teacher candidate mentee during clinical practice or residency in the classroom of the educator during a teacher preparation program, or provide induction

1 support to a newly certified teacher mentee
2 during the first 2 years of employment
3 after completion of a teacher preparation
4 program (including clinical practice);

5 (ii) provide support for a teacher can-
6 didate mentee during clinical practice or a
7 teacher residency program, or a beginning
8 teacher mentee during an induction pro-
9 gram, including information on the re-
10 sources and support based at the school
11 and the local educational agency serving
12 the school;

13 (iii) establish a role model relationship
14 for a mentee;

15 (iv) observe the mentee's teaching
16 methods in classroom settings and be ob-
17 served modeling best practices;

18 (v) provide mentoring to a mentee
19 teaching in the same field, grade, or sub-
20 ject; and

21 (vi) promote empirically based prac-
22 tice of, and scientifically valid research on,
23 where applicable—

24 (I) teaching and learning;

1 (II) assessment of student learn-
2 ing;

3 (III) the development of teaching
4 skills through the use of instructional
5 and behavioral interventions; and

6 (IV) the improvement of the ca-
7 pacity of the mentees to create inclu-
8 sive learning environments and meas-
9 urably advance student learning
10 among diverse learners.

11 (10) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area” has
12 the meaning given the term in section 343(a)(13)(A)
13 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development
14 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(A)).

15 (11) RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.—The term
16 “rural school district” means a school district that
17 serves one or more schools located in a rural area.

18 (12) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”
19 means the Secretary of Education.

20 (13) STEM.—The term “STEM” means
21 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

22 (14) TEACHING RESIDENCY PROGRAM.—The
23 term “teaching residency program” has the meaning
24 given the term in section 200 of the Higher Edu-
25 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1021), except that

1 such term shall not include the requirement that the
2 prospective teacher acquire a master's degree prior
3 to completion of the program, but instead shall earn
4 a bachelor's or a master's degree prior to completion
5 of the program.

6 **SEC. 4. ADDRESSING TEACHER SHORTAGES PROGRAM.**

7 (a) ADDRESSING TEACHER SHORTAGES PROGRAM
8 ESTABLISHED.—

9 (1) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

10 (A) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made
11 available to carry out this Act, the Secretary
12 shall establish an Addressing Teacher Short-
13 ages Program, through which the Secretary
14 shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to
15 eligible entities to enable the eligible entities to
16 carry out activities described in subsection (d)
17 in continuous consultation with the schools
18 served by the eligible entity.

19 (B) PLANNING GRANTS.—Notwithstanding
20 subparagraph (A), the Secretary may use funds
21 made available under this section, and not re-
22 quired for purposes of subsection (c)(2), to
23 award, on a competitive basis, 1-year planning
24 grants to eligible entities that have not received
25 grants under subparagraph (A), to assist with

1 the costs of preparing and submitting an appli-
2 cation under subsection (b).

3 (2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under para-
4 graph (1)(A)—

5 (A) shall be for a period of at least 5
6 years; and

7 (B) may be renewed if the eligible entity
8 demonstrates sufficient positive outcomes as de-
9 scribed in section 5 and evidence of potential
10 for continued success in achieving the goals of
11 the initial grant.

12 (3) ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM.—The au-
13 thority to administer the Addressing Teacher Short-
14 ages Program under this Act may not be transferred
15 to another Federal department or agency.

16 (b) APPLICATION.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desiring a
18 grant under subsection (a)(1)(A) shall submit an ap-
19 plication to the Secretary at such time, in such man-
20 ner, and containing such information as the Sec-
21 retary may require.

22 (2) CONTENTS.—An application submitted
23 under paragraph (1) shall—

1 (A) describe the selected activities de-
2 scribed in subsection (d) for which assistance
3 under this section is sought;

4 (B) include a description of the evaluation
5 plan required under section 5;

6 (C) provide such additional assurances as
7 the Secretary determines to be essential to en-
8 sure compliance with the requirements of this
9 Act; and

10 (D) if seeking support for a teaching resi-
11 dency program, demonstrate that the institution
12 of higher education that is a partner in the eli-
13 gible entity is approved to prepare candidates
14 for State teaching licensure or certification.

15 (c) AWARD BASIS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall deter-
17 mine the minimum number, and the dollar amount,
18 of grants provided under this section based on the
19 amount made available under section 7.

20 (2) AWARD BASIS.—In awarding grants under
21 this section, the Secretary shall—

22 (A) reserve 5 percent of the grant funds
23 available to carry out this section for the Sec-
24 retary of the Interior, to enable the Secretary
25 of the Interior to carry out the purposes of this

1 Act in schools supported by the Bureau of In-
2 dian Education; and

3 (B) use, from the amount remaining after
4 the application of subparagraph (A) and to the
5 extent practicable based on the applications re-
6 ceived under subsection (b)—

7 (i) not less than 25 percent of the re-
8 maining amount to address teacher short-
9 age challenges in local educational agencies
10 serving rural areas;

11 (ii) not less than 25 percent of the re-
12 maining amount to address shortages in
13 high-need subject areas; and

14 (iii) not less than 25 percent of the
15 grant funds available to diversify the
16 teaching workforce.

17 (3) PRIORITY.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-
19 graph (B), in evaluating applications for grants
20 under subsection (a)(1)(A), the Secretary shall
21 provide a competitive priority for applications
22 proposing programs that will—

23 (i) address the shortages described in
24 clauses (i) and (ii) of paragraph (2)(B);
25 and

1 (ii) include partnerships with minor-
2 ity-serving institutions, such as historically
3 Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-
4 serving institutions (as defined in section
5 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965
6 (20 U.S.C. 1101a)), or Tribal Colleges and
7 Universities (as defined in section 316 of
8 such Act (20 U.S.C. 1059c)).

9 (B) PRIORITY FOR TEACHING RESIDENCY
10 AND GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAMS.—In review-
11 ing applications for grants under subsection
12 (a)(1)(A) that propose to cover costs associated
13 with teaching residency programs or Grow Your
14 Own programs, the Secretary shall provide a
15 competitive priority to eligible entities that pro-
16 pose to carry out a program designed to pre-
17 pare, for teaching licensure or certification, in-
18 dividuals who, as of the date of the individuals'
19 application or acceptance into the program—

20 (i) are employed by a local educational
21 agency participating in the eligible entity
22 as a paraprofessional, substitute teacher,
23 or other employee of the school community;
24 and

1 (ii) have been so employed for not less
2 than 3 years.

3 (d) USE OF FUNDS.—A recipient of a grant under
4 subsection (a)(1)(A) shall use grant funds for not less
5 than one of the following activities:

6 (1) Establishing or expanding teaching resi-
7 dency programs, which may include covering—

8 (A) all or part of a resident's tuition in ex-
9 change for a commitment to teach in the com-
10 munity for a minimum of 3 years;

11 (B) resident salaries;

12 (C) mentor teacher incentives;

13 (D) facilities or infrastructure for a dis-
14 tance learning classroom within the school for
15 onsite coursework and practical learning; and

16 (E) any other purpose that the Secretary
17 determines appropriate.

18 (2) Establishing or expanding a teacher mentor
19 program, which may include providing a training
20 program or endorsement for school-based mentor
21 teachers.

22 (3) Establishing or expanding a Grow Your
23 Own program.

24 (4) Establishing or expanding a 2+2 program.

1 (5) Establishing or expanding a program at an
2 institution of higher education that encourages stu-
3 dents majoring in STEM fields to take courses in
4 education.

5 (6) Establishing or expanding teacher prepara-
6 tion pathways in secondary schools.

7 (7) Establishing or expanding other evidence-
8 based strategies to increase teacher retention and
9 support teachers, including—

10 (A) increasing access to, and the effective
11 use of, technology for the purpose of providing
12 professional development to educators in rural
13 or remote areas;

14 (B) supporting teachers in fulfilling addi-
15 tional credit requirements needed for a teacher
16 to—

17 (i) become licensed or certified in ad-
18 ditional subject areas;

19 (ii) earn an additional qualification or
20 licensure or certification endorsement that
21 meets a specific need of the school in
22 which the teacher is employed;

23 (iii) earn additional qualifications to
24 obtain National Board Certification; or

1 (iv) qualify to teach Advanced Place-
2 ment, International Baccalaureate, or dual
3 or concurrent enrollment programs;

4 (C) providing opportunities for career ad-
5 vancement that offer increased pay for teachers
6 who demonstrate expertise and take on addi-
7 tional leadership roles;

8 (D) establishing induction programs for
9 novice teachers during their first 2 years in the
10 profession;

11 (E)(i) providing tuition assistance, a sti-
12 pend, or a housing allowance during student
13 teaching to student teachers participating in the
14 program who commit to teaching placements
15 that would address any of the shortages de-
16 scribed in clause (i) or (ii) of subsection
17 (c)(2)(B); and

18 (ii) if the eligible entity chooses to do so,
19 and only after assisting student teachers under
20 clause (i), providing a stipend or housing allow-
21 ance to teachers in their first or second year of
22 teaching who commit to teaching placements
23 that would address any of the shortages de-
24 scribed in clause (i) or (ii) of subsection
25 (c)(2)(B); or

1 (F) providing professional development for
 2 school administrators focusing on teacher lead-
 3 ership or teacher retention.

4 (e) MATCHING FUNDS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that re-
 6 ceives a grant under subsection (a)(1)(A) shall pro-
 7 vide, toward the cost of the activities assisted under
 8 the grant and from non-Federal sources, an amount
 9 equal to or greater than the amount of the grant,
 10 subject to paragraph (2).

11 (2) REDUCTION OR WAIVER OF MATCHING
 12 FUNDS.—If the Secretary determines necessary
 13 based on the economic condition of the eligible enti-
 14 ty, the Secretary may—

15 (A) determine that a lesser matching
 16 amount than described in paragraph (1) is re-
 17 quired, based on a sliding scale; or

18 (B) waive the requirements of paragraph
 19 (1).

20 (f) DESIGNATED PERSONNEL FOR UNDER-
 21 RESOURCED APPLICATIONS.—The Secretary shall des-
 22 ignate not less than 1 employee who, during and preceding
 23 the application period for a grant under this Act, will ex-
 24 clusively support under-resourced eligible entities with the

1 preparation of grant applications under subsection
2 (a)(1)(A).

3 **SEC. 5. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.**

4 (a) EVALUATION.—Each entity submitting an appli-
5 cation for a grant under section 4(a)(1)(A) shall establish,
6 and include in such application, an evaluation plan that
7 includes relevant and measurable performance objectives.
8 At a minimum, the plan shall include objectives and meas-
9 ures for—

10 (1) educator retention rates in the first 3 and
11 5 years for teachers, principals, and other educators
12 participating in the program supported under the
13 grant;

14 (2)(A) pass rates and scaled scores for initial
15 State licensure or certification of teachers for par-
16 ticipating teachers; or

17 (B) pass rates and average scores on valid and
18 reliable teacher performance assessments for partici-
19 pating teachers;

20 (3) the number of participating teachers, prin-
21 cipals, and other educators who are hired by the
22 high-need local educational agency;

23 (4) the percentage of participating teachers,
24 principals, and other educators who are members of
25 underrepresented groups;

1 (5) the percentage of participating teachers who
2 teach high-need fields or academic subject areas
3 such as STEM fields, language instruction edu-
4 cational programs for limited English proficient stu-
5 dents, and special education; and

6 (6) the percentage of participating teachers and
7 other educators who teach in high-need schools,
8 disaggregated by the elementary school and sec-
9 ondary school levels.

10 (b) REPORTING.—

11 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY REPORTS.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—At the end of the third
13 year and the fifth year of a grant awarded
14 under section 4(a)(1)(A), each eligible entity re-
15 ceiving such grant shall prepare and submit to
16 the Secretary a report regarding the program
17 carried out under this Act, including the pro-
18 gram’s performance with respect to the objec-
19 tives and measures described in subsection (a).

20 (B) ADDITIONAL REPORTS.—In the case of
21 an eligible entity whose grant under section
22 4(a)(1)(A) was renewed or was for an initial pe-
23 riod of more than 5 years, the eligible entity
24 shall submit a report described in subparagraph
25 (A) on an annual basis for each year of the re-

1 newal or each year after the fifth year of the
2 grant, respectively.

3 (2) SECRETARY REPORTS.—By not later than 2
4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, and
5 every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary shall submit
6 a report to the Committee on Health, Education,
7 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Com-
8 mittee on Education and Labor of the House of
9 Representatives about the strengths and weaknesses
10 of the grant program carried out under section 4.

11 **SEC. 6. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

12 It is the sense of Congress that teaching should be
13 formally recognized as a career pathway that is part of
14 career and technical education, as defined in section 3 of
15 the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act
16 of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302), allowing early career pathway
17 programs in education (especially in STEM education) to
18 be eligible for funds available through programs that sup-
19 port career and technical education.

20 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

21 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
22 this Act such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal
23 years 2027 through 2032.

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