

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4258

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to revitalize
schoolyards.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2026

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

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants
to revitalize schoolyards.

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 “Revitalizing America’s
5 Schoolyards Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **ELIGIBLE ENTITY.**—The term “eligible enti-
9 ty” means—

10 (A) a local educational agency;

1 (B) an educational service agency; or

2 (C) a nonprofit organization that has ex-
 3 pertise in outdoor learning, nature play, spaces,
 4 or outdoor education working in partnership
 5 with a local educational agency.

6 (2) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “educational
 7 service agency”, “elementary school”, “high school”,
 8 “local educational agency”, and “secondary school”
 9 have the meanings given the terms in section 8101
 10 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
 11 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

12 (3) REVITALIZED SCHOOLYARD.—The term
 13 “revitalized schoolyard”—

14 (A) means a park-like outdoor environment
 15 at an elementary school or secondary school
 16 that has been updated to—

17 (i) strengthen local ecological systems;

18 (ii) provide a range of hands-on learn-
 19 ing resources; and

20 (iii) foster nature play and social op-
 21 portunities while enhancing the health and
 22 well-being of children and adults; and

23 (B) may—

24 (i) include—

- 1 (I) trees and plants where chil-
 2 dren can access them;
 3 (II) cultivated gardens;
 4 (III) outdoor meeting and gath-
 5 ering areas; and
 6 (IV) other elements designed by,
 7 and for, the students and the sur-
 8 rounding community; and
 9 (ii) serve as a facility for shared pub-
 10 lic use.

11 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
 12 the Secretary of Education.

13 (5) SHARED PUBLIC USE.—The term “shared
 14 public use” means use as public facility that, to the
 15 extent feasible, is open and accessible to the public,
 16 outside of school hours, but during daylight hours.

17 **SEC. 3. GRANT COHORT STRUCTURE, DURATION, AND**
 18 **AMOUNT.**

19 (a) RESERVATION FOR TRIBAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
 20 CIES INCLUDING THE BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION.—
 21 From the amount appropriated to carry out this Act for
 22 a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve 5 percent for the
 23 Secretary of the Interior to carry out this Act for schools
 24 operated by the Bureau of Indian Education or schools
 25 that are operated by an Indian Tribe, or an organization

1 controlled or sanctioned by an Indian tribal government,
 2 for the children of that Tribe under a contract with, or
 3 grant from, the Department of the Interior under the In-
 4 dian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 5321 et seq.) or
 5 the Tribally Controlled Schools Act of 1988 (25 U.S.C.
 6 2501 et seq.).

7 (b) COHORT STRUCTURE.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Grants awarded under this
 9 Act shall be awarded in cohorts on a biennial cycle.

10 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—Each cohort shall be eligible
 11 for—

12 (A) a planning grant described in section
 13 4(a) in the first year; and

14 (B) subject to the availability of appro-
 15 priated funds and a determination by the Sec-
 16 retary that the grantee has demonstrated the
 17 viability of the proposed project, an implemen-
 18 tation grant described in section 4(b) in the
 19 second year.

20 (3) CRITERIA FOR VIABILITY.—The Secretary
 21 shall establish criteria for determining viability
 22 under paragraph (2), which may include the ade-
 23 quacy of the concept plan described in section
 24 4(a)(3)(A).

25 (c) GRANT AMOUNTS AND DURATION.—

1 (1) GRANT AMOUNTS.—From the amount re-
2 maining for a fiscal year after making the reserva-
3 tion under subsection (a), the Secretary shall use—

4 (A) 30 percent of such amount to award
5 planning grants under section 4(a); and

6 (B) 70 percent of such amount to award
7 implementation grants under section 4(b).

8 (2) AMOUNTS.—An eligible entity may receive
9 not more than \$1,000,000 in grant awards for both
10 a planning grant and implementation grant in total
11 under section 4.

12 (3) DURATION.—Planning grants and imple-
13 mentation grants awarded under section 4 shall each
14 be for a period of not more than 2 years, for a total
15 of 4 years.

16 (4) REALLOCATION.—The Secretary may au-
17 thorize the reallocation of funds awarded under a
18 planning grant to support implementation activities
19 in a subsequent fiscal year, provided such realloca-
20 tion does not exceed the total award cap established
21 under this section and is consistent with the pur-
22 poses of the grant.

23 (d) SURPLUS FUNDS.—

24 (1) USE OF SURPLUS FUNDS FOR ADDITIONAL
25 GRANT AWARDS.—If, after awarding initial planning

grants, the Secretary determines that remaining unobligated funds are available due to awardees requesting less than the maximum grant amount or due to denial of applications for failure to demonstrate concept plan viability under section 4(a)(3)(A), the Secretary may use such remaining funds to make additional grant awards to other eligible entities from the same application cycle, if—

(A) such applicants meet or exceed the minimum criteria for awards established in the notice inviting applications;

(B) the total amount awarded in a fiscal year does not exceed the amount appropriated for that year; and

(C) such additional awards do not exceed the maximum grant amount specified under subsection (c).

(2) PRIORITY.—In making additional awards, the Secretary shall prioritize applicants that scored highly, but were not initially funded due to funding limitations.

SEC. 4. PLANNING GRANTS AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.

(a) PLANNING GRANTS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
2 planning grants to eligible entities to enable the eli-
3 gible entities to develop concept plans described in
4 paragraph (3) to turn some or all of the outdoor
5 spaces of the public elementary schools and sec-
6 ondary schools served by the eligible entities into re-
7 vitalized schoolyards.

8 (2) APPLICATIONS.—An eligible entity that de-
9 sires to receive a grant under this subsection shall
10 submit an application to the Secretary at such time,
11 in such manner, and accompanied by such informa-
12 tion as the Secretary may require, including the fol-
13 lowing:

14 (A) An initial scope of work briefly sum-
15 marizing the project.

16 (B) A plan for educator professional devel-
17 opment to support educators in using the revi-
18 talized schoolyard.

19 (C) Identification of State learning stand-
20 ards that may be addressed through student in-
21 volvement in the revitalized schoolyard.

22 (D) A plan for how the eligible entity will
23 provide for maintenance and operation of the
24 revitalized schoolyard after the grant period
25 ends.

(3) USE OF FUNDS.—

(A) CONCEPT PLAN.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this subsection shall use the grant funds to develop a concept plan, including design and construction documents, to turn some or all of the outdoor spaces of the public elementary schools and secondary schools served by the eligible entity into revitalized schoolyards. Such concept plan shall comply with the following:

(i) Be developed with school and public input, including students, families, educators, school staff, and the public.

(ii) Be developed with the goal of longevity and resilience of the revitalized schoolyard after the grant period under this subsection and subsection (b) has expired.

(iii) Maximize investment in schools with low tree canopy and vulnerability to extreme heat or flooding.

(iv) Maximize investment in schools with a high percentage of students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch under the school lunch program established under the

Richard B. Russell National School Lunch
Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.).

(v) Include—

(I) ecological, climate, and biodiversity goals;

(II) learning and education goals;

(III) physical and mental health goals;

(IV) a description of how the entity will provide accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.);

(V) the number of students to be served at each school served under the grant, the total size of each such school property in acres, and the size of the proposed revitalized schoolyard at each site in acres;

(VI) a concept plan drawing of the design proposed for each school served under the grant;

(VII) an estimate of the probable cost based on the scope of work identified in the concept plan;

1 (VIII) an identification of com-
2 munity partners, including nonprofit
3 organizations or design professionals,
4 that have expertise in outdoor learn-
5 ing spaces or outdoor education, if ap-
6 plicable;

7 (IX) a long-term management
8 plan describing how the eligible entity
9 proposes to maintain the revitalized
10 schoolyard over time and how the con-
11 cept plan relates to other district
12 plans; and

13 (X) how components of the site
14 design may address—

15 (aa) growing food, planting
16 pollinator plants, creating habitat
17 for wildlife, and creating amen-
18 ities to support students in ob-
19 serving nature and participating
20 in school gardens;

21 (bb) conserving water and
22 managing stormwater;

23 (cc) supporting hands-on
24 learning activities and programs
25 across subject areas and grade

- 1 levels, such as conducting experi-
2 ments regarding soil, wind,
3 water, and other elements;
- 4 (dd) using the arts, such as
5 preparing skits, plays, murals,
6 drawings, and sculptures that
7 celebrate nature, including its
8 animals, plants, patterns, and be-
9 haviors, to strengthen learning
10 objectives;
- 11 (ee) planting, to the extent
12 practicable, native and nonnative
13 species, which—
- 14 (AA) directly protect
15 students from the effects of
16 extreme heat due to climate
17 change; and
- 18 (BB) cast shade on ad-
19 jacent classroom windows in
20 the school building to help
21 reduce temperatures indoors
22 and save cooling costs dur-
23 ing the warmest parts of the
24 school year; and

(ff) the use of natural playgrounds, which include natural and nature-based elements, such as rock gardens, sand boxes, log stumps, streams, living plants, or innovative playground elements, that encourage gross motor play and integrated with the outdoor landscape and vegetation, and which—

(AA) will absorb less heat from the sun and air than traditional playgrounds and equipment;

(BB) are inclusive and accessible for children of all abilities;

(CC) allow children to learn about nature; and

(DD) use non-petroleum-based materials.

(B) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that receives a grant under this subsection may use grant funds to hire or contract a

1 qualified grant writer or consultant as an
2 allowable administrative cost to assist the
3 eligible entity in preparing and submitting
4 an application for an implementation grant
5 under subsection (b).

6 (ii) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—An eligible
7 entity may use not more than 10 percent
8 of the total grant award to hire or contract
9 a qualified grant writer or consultant as
10 described in clause (i).

11 (b) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
13 implementation grants to eligible entities that re-
14 ceived a planning grant under subsection (a) and de-
15 veloped a concept plan in accordance with subsection
16 (a).

17 (2) APPLICATIONS.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
19 desires to receive a grant under this subsection
20 shall submit an application to the Secretary at
21 such time, in such manner, and accompanied by
22 such information as the Secretary may require.

23 (B) MULTIPLE GRANTS.—An eligible entity
24 may apply for more than 1 grant under this

1 subsection in order to complete individual
2 schools in separate phases.

3 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—

4 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
5 receives a grant under this subsection shall use
6 the grant funds to implement some or all of the
7 concept plan developed in accordance with sub-
8 section (a) by turning some or all of the out-
9 door spaces of the public elementary schools
10 and secondary schools served by the eligible en-
11 tity into revitalized schoolyards.

12 (B) PERMISSIBLE USES.—An eligible enti-
13 ty that receives a grant under this subsection
14 may use not more than 25 percent of the grant
15 funds—

16 (i) for professional development for
17 school leadership, educators, and para-
18 professionals related to outdoor teaching
19 and bringing students outside for learning;
20 and

21 (ii) to support an educator or other
22 school staff member or school partner to
23 establish, maintain, and steward the revi-
24 talized schoolyard of the elementary
25 schools and secondary schools served by

1 the eligible entity and provide professional
2 development described in clause (i).

3 (4) MATCH.—

4 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
5 receives a grant under this subsection shall pro-
6 vide matching funds from non-Federal sources
7 in an amount equal to 20 percent of the grant
8 award.

9 (B) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive
10 the matching requirement under subparagraph
11 (A) for an eligible entity that—

12 (i) receives a grant under this sub-
13 section and serves students not less than
14 40 percent of whom are eligible for a free
15 or reduced-price lunch under the school
16 lunch program established under the Rich-
17 ard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
18 (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.), which calcula-
19 tion, in the case of high schools served by
20 the eligible entity, may be completed using
21 comparable data from the schools that feed
22 into the high schools; or

23 (ii) receives a grant under this sub-
24 section and serves a school described in
25 section 3(a).

1 **SEC. 5. PRIORITY.**

2 In awarding grants under this Act, the Secretary
3 shall give competitive priority to an eligible entity—

4 (1) that serves students not less than 75 per-
5 cent of whom are eligible for a free or reduced-price
6 lunch under the school lunch program established
7 under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch
8 Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.), which calculation, in
9 the case of high schools served by the eligible entity,
10 may be completed using comparable data from the
11 schools that feed into the high schools; or

12 (2) that serves a school—

13 (A) that serves students not less than 75
14 percent of whom are eligible for a free or re-
15 duced-price lunch under the school lunch pro-
16 gram established under the Richard B. Russell
17 National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et
18 seq.), which calculation, in the case of high
19 schools served by the eligible entity, may be
20 completed using comparable data from the
21 schools that feed into the high schools; and

22 (B) where the proposed revitalized school-
23 yard will be developed.

24 **SEC. 6. CLEARINGHOUSE.**

25 The Secretary shall maintain a clearinghouse of in-
26 formation that—

1 (1) provides examples of outdoor learning
2 spaces, including successful models being used;

3 (2) includes input from nonprofit organizations,
4 professionals, and other community members with
5 expertise in outdoor learning spaces and environ-
6 mental education;

7 (3) provides links and information about State
8 and local entities with expertise in outdoor learning
9 spaces and environmental education;

10 (4) reflects best practices on designs for out-
11 door spaces relating to nature play, non-petroleum
12 based materials, maintenance, stewardship re-
13 sources, example partnership programs, green infra-
14 structure in schools examples, outdoor learning re-
15 sources, lesson plans, and planning tools; and

16 (5) is housed within the National Center on
17 School Infrastructure, or other clearinghouse, as ap-
18 propriate.

19 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

20 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
21 this Act such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal
22 years 2027 through 2031.

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