

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4409

To clarify the program standards registration process for registered apprenticeship programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 28, 2026

Mr. BANKS (for himself and Mr. CASSIDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To clarify the program standards registration process for registered apprenticeship programs, 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 “Streamlining Timely
5 Apprenticeship Registration and Transparency Act” or
6 the “START Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM STANDARDS AP-**
 2 **PROVAL.**

3 The Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as
 4 the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter
 5 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.) is amended—

6 (1) by redesignating section 4 as section 5; and

7 (2) by inserting after section 3 the following:

8 **“SEC. 4. APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REGISTRATION.**

9 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

10 “(1) COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘com-
 12 petency-based approach’ means, with respect to
 13 a program registered as an apprenticeship pro-
 14 gram under this Act, measuring skill acquisi-
 15 tion in the program through the successful
 16 demonstration of acquired skills and knowledge,
 17 as verified by the program sponsor.

18 “(B) ON-THE-JOB LEARNING.—A program
 19 described in subparagraph (A) program that
 20 uses the competency-based approach shall be
 21 required to include completion of an on-the-job
 22 learning component of the program for pur-
 23 poses of such an approach.

24 “(2) COMPLETE PROGRAM STANDARDS.—The
 25 term ‘complete program standards’ means program
 26 standards submitted to the Secretary or a State ap-

1 prenticeship agency in accordance with subsection
2 (b)(1) that—

3 “(A) satisfy each of the requirements in
4 subparagraphs (A) through (D) of such sub-
5 section; and

6 “(B) do not contain clerical errors as de-
7 termined by the Secretary or State apprentice-
8 ship agency.

9 “(3) INCOMPLETE PROGRAM STANDARDS.—The
10 term ‘incomplete program standards’ means pro-
11 gram standards submitted to the Secretary or a
12 State apprenticeship agency in accordance with sub-
13 section (b)(1) that—

14 “(A) fail to satisfy one or more of the re-
15 quirements in subparagraphs (A) through (D)
16 of such subsection; or

17 “(B) contain clerical errors as determined
18 by the Secretary or State apprenticeship agen-
19 cy.

20 “(4) NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM.—
21 The term ‘national apprenticeship system’ means the
22 system established by the Secretary of Labor to
23 carry out the activities authorized and directed to be
24 carried out under section 1.

1 “(5) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
2 the Secretary of Labor.

3 “(6) STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY.—The
4 term ‘State apprenticeship agency’ means an entity
5 of the government of a State that is recognized,
6 under criteria established by the Secretary, for pur-
7 poses of approving program standards that conform
8 with the standards set by the Secretary for reg-
9 istering apprenticeship programs under the national
10 apprenticeship system.

11 “(7) TIME-BASED APPROACH.—The term ‘time-
12 based approach’ means, with respect to a program
13 registered as an apprenticeship program under this
14 Act, measuring skill acquisition in the program
15 through the completion of at least 2,000 hours of
16 on-the-job learning as described in a work process
17 schedule.

18 “(b) IN GENERAL.—In administering this Act the
19 Secretary shall establish a national apprenticeship system
20 that provides the following:

21 “(1) PROGRAM STANDARDS FOR REGISTRA-
22 TION.—A person seeking to register a program as
23 an apprenticeship program under this Act shall sub-
24 mit program standards to the Secretary or, as rel-
25 evant, a State apprenticeship agency at such time

1 and in such manner as the Secretary may require,
2 that—

3 “(A) list each of the entities involved in
4 the program, including any employer, group of
5 employers, employer association, labor organiza-
6 tion, or labor-management organization;

7 “(B) specify whether the program uses a
8 competency-based, time-based, or hybrid ap-
9 proach;

10 “(C) provide sufficient information to de-
11 termine whether the apprenticeship program
12 standards conform with wage, safety, and li-
13 censing standards required by the State in
14 which the program will operate and any other
15 State standards with which the Secretary re-
16 quires entities submitting program standards to
17 comply; and

18 “(D) provide sufficient information to de-
19 termine whether the apprenticeship program
20 standards conform with standards of appren-
21 ticeship established by the Secretary under this
22 Act, including the requirements under part 29
23 of title 29, Code of Federal Regulations (or suc-
24 cessor regulations).

25 “(2) REVIEWING PROGRAM STANDARDS.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90
2 days after receipt by the Secretary or a State
3 apprenticeship agency of program standards
4 submitted in accordance with paragraph (1),
5 the Secretary or State apprenticeship agency
6 shall, if the program standards are complete
7 program standards, provide to the prospective
8 sponsor a decision that—

9 “(i) approves or denies the program
10 standards; and

11 “(ii) if the decision is a denial, states
12 the areas of noncompliance and provides
13 suggestive action to correct the noncompli-
14 ance.

15 “(B) INCOMPLETE PROGRAM STAND-
16 ARDS.—Not later than 30 days after receipt by
17 the Secretary or a State apprenticeship agency
18 of program standards submitted in accordance
19 with paragraph (1), the Secretary or State ap-
20 prenticeship agency shall, if the program stand-
21 ards are incomplete program standards, provide
22 the prospective sponsor with corrective feedback
23 to direct the prospective sponsor to bring such
24 program standards into conformity with com-
25 plete program standards.

1 “(C) PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY.—
 2 Beginning not later than 120 days after the
 3 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary
 4 shall, on a monthly basis, make publicly avail-
 5 able online the average response times by the
 6 Secretary to standards submitted in accordance
 7 with paragraph (1), disaggregated by whether
 8 the standards are complete program standards
 9 or incomplete program standards.”.

10 **SEC. 3. CLARIFICATION OF THE ROLE OF STATE APPREN-**
 11 **TICESHIP COUNCILS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Act of August 16, 1937
 13 (commonly known as the “National Apprenticeship Act”;
 14 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.), as
 15 amended by section 2, is further amended by adding at
 16 the end of section 4 of such Act (as added by section 2)
 17 the following:

18 “(3) STATE APPRENTICESHIP COUNCILS.—A
 19 State apprenticeship council of any State apprentice-
 20 ship agency shall not—

21 “(A) have the final decision making au-
 22 thority for purposes of paragraph (2) over any
 23 program standards submitted in accordance
 24 with this subsection; or

1 “(B) be required to recommend any such
2 program standards for purposes of such para-
3 graph.”.

4 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
5 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 2 years
6 after the date of enactment of this Act.

7 **SEC. 4. APPRENTICESHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) APPRENTICE.—The term “apprentice”
10 means an individual participating in a registered ap-
11 prenticeship program.

12 (2) NEW APPRENTICE.—The term “new ap-
13 prentice” means, with respect to applying the for-
14 mula established under subsection (c)(1) for a pro-
15 gram year, an apprentice who is newly enrolled in a
16 registered apprenticeship program in such program
17 year.

18 (3) PROGRAM YEAR.—The term “program
19 year” means the year period beginning on July 1
20 and ending on June 30 of the next year.

21 (4) REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.—
22 The term “registered apprenticeship program”
23 means an apprenticeship program registered under
24 the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as

1 the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664,
2 chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

3 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
4 the Secretary of Labor.

5 (6) STATE.—Except in subsection (c)(1)(C), the
6 term “State” means each of the several States of
7 the United States, the District of Columbia, and any
8 territory or possession of the United States.

9 (7) STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY.—The
10 term “State apprenticeship agency” has the meaning
11 given such term in section 4 of the Act of August
12 16, 1937 (commonly known as the “National Ap-
13 prenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29
14 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

15 (b) IN GENERAL.—For each program year that be-
16 gins after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
17 shall, not later than the beginning of the program year,
18 award grants to States for the program year, in accord-
19 ance with the formula under subsection (c), to carry out
20 the activities described in subsection (d).

21 (c) AWARD PROCEDURES.—The Secretary shall
22 award grant funds under subsection (b) in accordance
23 with the following:

24 (1) FORMULA FOR ALLOTMENT.—Not later
25 than 30 days before the start of each program year,

1 the Secretary shall establish a formula to determine
2 the allotment amounts for each program year for the
3 grant that—

4 (A) is based on the population of the State
5 and the number of apprentices whose primary
6 residence is in the State as compared to the
7 population of every other State and number of
8 apprentices whose primary residence is in any
9 other State;

10 (B) is based on the number of new appren-
11 tices whose primary residence is in the State as
12 compared to the number of new apprentices
13 whose primary residence is in any other State;
14 and

15 (C) subject to available appropriations,
16 provides that each of the several States of the
17 United States and the District of Columbia
18 shall not be allotted less than \$1,000,000 for
19 each program year.

20 (2) AWARD AMOUNT.—Subject to paragraph
21 (3), the Secretary shall award each State an amount
22 for a program year equal to the sum of—

23 (A) half of the amount allotted to the
24 State under the formula established under
25 paragraph (1) for the program year;

1 (B) an amount (not more than the amount
2 described in subparagraph (A)) equal to the
3 matching amount in the notice submitted by the
4 State under subsection (e); and

5 (C) if the matching amount of the State is
6 equal to the amount described in subparagraph
7 (A), the proportional amount for the State as
8 determined under paragraph (4).

9 (3) DEDUCTION FOR DELAYED RESPONSES FOR
10 REGISTERING APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS.—

11 (A) DETERMINATION OF DELAY.—The
12 Secretary shall determine the average complete
13 program standards response time and the aver-
14 age incomplete program standards response
15 time of each State that—

16 (i) receives a grant under this section;
17 and

18 (ii) registers registered apprenticeship
19 programs in the State through a State ap-
20 prenticeship agency.

21 (B) DEDUCTION.—For each such State in
22 which the Secretary under subparagraph (A)
23 determines the average complete program
24 standards response time is more than 90 days
25 in a program year or the average incomplete

1 program standards response time is more than
 2 30 days in a program year, the Secretary shall
 3 deduct a percentage of the award amount under
 4 paragraph (2) for the next program year that
 5 is—

6 (i) equal to half of the sum of—

7 (I) the number of days of the av-
 8 erage complete program standards re-
 9 sponse time minus 90; and

10 (II) the number of days of the
 11 average incomplete program standards
 12 response time minus 30; but

13 (ii) not more than 20.

14 (C) AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME.—

15 (i) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of
 16 this paragraph:

17 (I) AVERAGE COMPLETE PRO-
 18 GRAM STANDARDS RESPONSE TIME.—

19 The term “average complete program
 20 standards response time” means the
 21 average number of days between the
 22 State receiving a complete program
 23 standards package by a program seek-
 24 ing to be a registered apprenticeship
 25 program and the State apprenticeship

1 agency of the State providing an ap-
2 proval or a denial with suggestive ac-
3 tion.

4 (II) AVERAGE INCOMPLETE PRO-
5 GRAM STANDARDS RESPONSE TIME.—

6 The term “average incomplete pro-
7 gram standards response time” means
8 the average number of days between
9 the State receiving an incomplete pro-
10 gram standards package by a program
11 seeking to be a registered apprentice-
12 ship program and the State appren-
13 ticeship agency of the State providing
14 a response with suggestive action.

15 (III) COMPLETE PROGRAM
16 STANDARDS PACKAGE; INCOMPLETE
17 PROGRAM STANDARDS PACKAGE.—

18 The terms “complete program stand-
19 ards package” and “incomplete pro-
20 gram standards package” have the
21 meanings given the terms “complete
22 program standards” and “incomplete
23 program standards”, respectively, in
24 section 4 of the Act of August 16,
25 1937 (commonly known as the “Na-

1 tional Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat.
2 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et
3 seq.).

4 (IV) SUGGESTIVE ACTION.—The
5 term “suggestive action” means, with
6 respect to program standards sub-
7 mitted by a program to a State ap-
8 prenticeship agency to be a registered
9 apprenticeship program, a response by
10 the State apprenticeship agency to
11 such program standards that is not
12 an approval of the program standards
13 and provides clear instructions to the
14 sponsor of the program on how the
15 program standards should be changed
16 to conform with the requirements for
17 registration as a registered appren-
18 ticeship program.

19 (ii) RULES OF INTERPRETATION.—

20 (I) DENIAL WITHOUT SUGGES-
21 TIVE ACTION.—For purposes of deter-
22 mining average complete program
23 standards response time, a denial
24 without providing suggestive action

1 shall not be interpreted to stop or
2 pause the determination.

3 (II) INQUIRES ON REGISTRA-
4 TION.—For purposes of determining
5 average complete program standards
6 response time and average incomplete
7 program standards response time, an
8 inquiry by a program to a State ap-
9 prenticeship agency regarding the reg-
10 istration process that does not provide
11 program standards documentation
12 shall not be considered a submission
13 of program standards.

14 (4) PROPORTIONAL AMOUNT OF ALLOTTED BUT
15 UNAWARDED FUNDS.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 15 days
17 before the start of each program year, the Sec-
18 retary shall, for purposes of paragraph (2)(C),
19 determine the proportional amount, as relevant,
20 for each State that provides a matching amount
21 under subsection (e) that is equal to the
22 amount described in paragraph (2)(A) for the
23 State for the program year.

24 (B) PROPORTIONAL AMOUNT.—The pro-
25 portional amount for a State for a program

year is an amount that bears the same ratio to the amount of allotted but unawarded funds for the program year as the amount allotted to the State under the formula established under paragraph (1) for the program year bears to the total amount of funds allotted to all States under the formula for the program year.

(C) ALLOTTED BUT UNAWARDED FUNDS.—The amount of allotted but unawarded funds for the program year is an amount equal to the total amount allotted under paragraph (1) for the program year minus the total amounts determined under subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2) for all States for the program year.

(d) ACTIVITIES.—A State shall use amounts awarded under subsection (b) to—

(1) provide technical assistance to existing and prospective sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs;

(2) fund the training of apprentices, including by paying the wages of an apprentice;

(3) fund outreach activities to increase awareness of registered apprenticeship programs and provide information on how to register an existing

1 training program as a registered apprenticeship pro-
2 gram; and

3 (4) provide financial incentives, including
4 through pay-for-performance funding models, to at-
5 tract employer investment in registered apprentice-
6 ship programs.

7 (e) NOTICE OF MATCHING AMOUNT BY STATES.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 30 days before
9 the start of each program year, a State seeking a
10 grant under subsection (b) shall submit a notice to
11 the Secretary of the amount the State intends to
12 provide for the program year to match the amount
13 provided through the grant, including proof of re-
14 sources for the matching amount.

15 (2) LIMIT TO MATCHING AMOUNT.—The match-
16 ing amount in a notice under paragraph (1) may not
17 be more than half of the amount allotted to the
18 State for the program year under the formula estab-
19 lished under subsection (c)(1).

20 (f) STATES WITHOUT A STATE APPRENTICESHIP
21 AGENCY.—A State that does not have a State apprentice-
22 ship agency shall designate an agency of the State govern-
23 ment for purposes of communications with the Secretary
24 regarding the grant program under this section.

1 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION.—There is
 2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out the grant pro-
 3 gram under this section \$150,000,000 for fiscal year 2027
 4 and for each fiscal year thereafter.

5 (h) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds available
 6 for use under subsection (d) shall supplement and not sup-
 7 plant other State or local public funds expended that sat-
 8 isfy the activities under such subsection.

9 **SEC. 5. POSTING RECIPROCITY REQUIREMENTS.**

10 The Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as
 11 the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter
 12 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.), as amended by sections 2 and
 13 3, is further amended by adding at the end of section 4
 14 of such Act (as added by section 2) the following:

15 “(4) DISCLOSURE OF RECIPROCITY REQUIRE-
 16 MENTS.—Each State apprenticeship agency shall
 17 make publicly available online the process used by
 18 the State apprenticeship agency in the State of the
 19 agency for registering under this Act an apprentice-
 20 ship program that has been otherwise registered
 21 under this Act by the Secretary or another State ap-
 22 prenticeship agency as a registered apprenticeship
 23 program in another State.”.

1 **SEC. 6. POSTING STATE APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS.**

2 The Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as
3 the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter
4 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.), as so amended, is further
5 amended by adding at the end of section 4 of such Act
6 (as added by section 2) the following:

7 “(5) DISCLOSURE OF STATE APPRENTICESHIP
8 STANDARDS.—Each State apprenticeship agency
9 shall make publicly available online information, as
10 required by the Secretary, on apprenticeship stand-
11 ards in such State, including—

12 “(A) State minimum wage requirements;

13 “(B) State safety standards; and

14 “(C) instructions for properly completing
15 documentation for proof of compliance with
16 program standards pertaining to on-the-job
17 training and related technical instruction re-
18 quirements.”.

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