

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4778

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to create evidence-based student success programs designed to increase participation, retention, and completion rates of high-need students.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 11, 2026

Mr. HEINRICH (for himself and Mr. COONS) 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 create evidence-based student success programs designed to increase participation, retention, and completion rates of high-need students.

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 “Postsecondary Student
5 Success Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE.**

2 It is the purpose of this Act to support evidence-based
3 participation, retention, and completion activities designed
4 to ensure the postsecondary success of high-need students.

5 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

6 In this Act:

7 (1) **COMPLETION RATE.**—The term “completion
8 rate” means—

9 (A) the percentage of students from an ini-
10 tial cohort enrolled at an entity that is a 2-year
11 institution who have graduated from the insti-
12 tution or transferred to a 4-year institution of
13 higher education; or

14 (B) the percentage of students from an ini-
15 tial cohort enrolled at an entity in the State
16 that is a 4-year institution who have graduated
17 from the institution.

18 (2) **DUAL OR CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT PRO-**
19 **GRAM.**—The term “dual or concurrent enrollment
20 program” has the meaning given the term in section
21 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education
22 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

23 (3) **EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL.**—The term
24 “early college high school” has the meaning given
25 the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-
26 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

1 (4) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
2 ty” means—

3 (A) a public institution of higher edu-
4 cation;

5 (B) a partnership between a nonprofit edu-
6 cational organization and an institution of high-
7 er education; or

8 (C) a consortium of institutions of higher
9 education.

10 (5) ELIGIBLE INDIAN ENTITY.—The term “eli-
11 gible Indian entity” means the entity responsible for
12 the governance, operation, or control of a Tribal Col-
13 lege or University.

14 (6) EVIDENCE-BASED.—The term “evidence-
15 based” has the meaning given the term in section
16 8101(21)(A) of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
17 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801(21)(A)).

18 (7) EVIDENCE TIERS.—

19 (A) EVIDENCE TIER 1 REFORM OR PRAC-
20 TICE.—The term “evidence tier 1 reform or
21 practice” means a reform or practice that prior
22 research suggests has promise for the purpose
23 of successfully improving student achievement
24 or attainment for high-need students.

1 (B) EVIDENCE TIER 2 REFORM OR PRAC-
 2 TICE.—The term “evidence tier 2 reform or
 3 practice” means a reform or practice described
 4 in subparagraph (A), or other reform or prac-
 5 tice meeting similar criteria, that measures im-
 6 pact and cost effectiveness of student success
 7 activities, and, through rigorous evaluation (in-
 8 cluding through the use of existing administra-
 9 tive data, as applicable), has been found to be
 10 successfully implemented.

11 (C) EVIDENCE TIER 3 REFORM OR PRAC-
 12 TICE.—The term “evidence tier 3 reform or
 13 practice” means a reform or practice described
 14 in subparagraph (B), or other reform or prac-
 15 tice meeting similar criteria, that has been
 16 found to produce sizable, important impacts on
 17 student success and—

18 (i) determining whether such impacts
 19 can be successfully reproduced and sus-
 20 tained over time; and

21 (ii) identifying the conditions in which
 22 such reform or practice is most effective.

23 (8) FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT.—
 24 The term “first generation college student” has the
 25 meaning given the term in section 402A(h) of the

1 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–
2 11(h)).

3 (9) HIGH-NEED STUDENT.—The term “high-
4 need student” means—

5 (A) a student from low-income back-
6 ground;

7 (B) a first generation college student;

8 (C) a caregiver student;

9 (D) a student with a disability;

10 (E) a student who stopped out before com-
11 pleting;

12 (F) a reentering justice-impacted student;

13 or

14 (G) a military-connected student.

15 (10) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

16 The term “institution of higher education” has the
17 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
18 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

19 (11) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”
20 means the Secretary of Education.

21 (12) TRIBAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.—The
22 term “Tribal College or University” has the meaning
23 given the term in section 316(b)(3) of the Higher
24 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)(3)).

1 **SEC. 4. RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR ELIGIBLE INDIAN EN-**
2 **TITIES.**

3 From the total amount appropriated to carry out this
4 Act for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve 2 percent
5 for grants to eligible Indian entities to increase participa-
6 tion, retention, and completion rates of high-need stu-
7 dents.

8 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF POSTSECONDARY STUDENT**
9 **SUCCESS COMPETITIVE GRANTS.**

10 (a) GRANT AUTHORIZATION.—For each of fiscal
11 years 2027 through 2032, the Secretary shall award, on
12 a competitive basis, grants to eligible entities to provide
13 student services to increase participation, retention, and
14 completion rates of high-need students.

15 (b) NOTIFICATION AND APPLICATION.—An eligible
16 entity or eligible Indian entity desiring a grant under this
17 Act shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
18 time, in such manner, and containing the information re-
19 quired under subsection (c).

20 (c) CONTENT OF APPLICATION.—An application sub-
21 mitted under this section shall include the following:

22 (1) A plan to increase, with respect to all stu-
23 dents enrolled at the eligible entity or Tribal College
24 or University, attainment and completion rates or
25 graduation rates, including—

1 (A) a description of the evidence-based re-
2 form or practice that would be used and wheth-
3 er the reform or practice would be an evidence
4 tier 1 reform or practice, evidence tier 2 reform
5 or practice, or evidence tier 3 reform or prac-
6 tice; and

7 (B) a particular focus on serving high-need
8 students through student services and collabo-
9 ration among 2-year programs, 4-year pro-
10 grams, and workforce systems.

11 (2) Annual benchmarks for student outcomes
12 with respect to the evidence-based reform or practice
13 that would be used.

14 (3) A plan to evaluate the evidence-based re-
15 form or practice that would be used.

16 (4) Rates of enrolled students who received a
17 Federal Pell Grant under subpart 1 of part A of
18 title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
19 U.S.C. 1070a et seq.).

20 (5) Demographics of enrolled students, includ-
21 ing high-need students.

22 (6) A description of how the eligible entity or
23 eligible Indian entity will, directly or in collaboration
24 with other institutions of higher education or non-
25 profit organizations, use the grant funds to imple-

1 ment one or more of the following evidence-based re-
2 forms and practices:

3 (A) Providing comprehensive academic, ca-
4 reer, and student services, which may include
5 mentoring, advising, or case management serv-
6 ices.

7 (B) Providing accelerated learning oppor-
8 tunities, which may include dual or concurrent
9 enrollment programs and early college high
10 school programs.

11 (C) Reforming course scheduling, or credit-
12 awarding policies.

13 (D) Improving transfer pathways between
14 the eligible entity, or Tribal College or Univer-
15 sity, and other institutions of higher education.

16 (7) A description of how the evidence-based re-
17 form or practice will be sustained once the grant ex-
18 pires.

19 (d) EVIDENCE-BASED STUDENT SUCCESS PRO-
20 GRAMS.—From the total amount appropriated to carry out
21 this Act for a fiscal year and not reserved under section
22 4, the Secretary shall reserve not less than 20 percent to
23 award grants to eligible entities with applications that pro-
24 pose to include evidence-based reforms and practices—

1 (1) at least 1 of which is an evidence tier 3 re-
2 form or practice; and

3 (2) the rest of which are evidence tier 1 reforms
4 or practices or evidence tier 2 reforms or practices.

5 (e) REQUIRED USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity
6 or eligible Indian entity that receives a grant under this
7 Act shall use the grant funds to carry out the plans sub-
8 mitted under subsection (c) and for evidence-based re-
9 forms and practices for improving participation, retention,
10 and completion rates of students that may include the fol-
11 lowing:

12 (1) Student services to support retention, com-
13 pletion, and success, which may include—

14 (A) faculty and peer counseling;

15 (B) use of real-time data on student
16 progress;

17 (C) improving transfer student success;

18 and

19 (D) incentives for students to re-enroll or
20 stay on track.

21 (2) Direct student support services, including a
22 combination of—

23 (A) tutoring, academic supports, and en-
24 richment services; and

25 (B) emergency financial assistance.

1 (3) Efforts to prepare students for a career,
2 which may include—

3 (A) career coaching, career counseling and
4 planning services, and efforts to lower student
5 to advisor ratios;

6 (B) networking and work-based learning
7 opportunities to support the development of
8 skills and professional relationships;

9 (C) utilizing career pathways; and

10 (D) boosting experiences necessary to ob-
11 tain and succeed in high-skill, high-wage, or in-
12 demand industry sectors or occupations, as de-
13 scribed in section 135(b)(3) of the Carl D. Per-
14 kins Career and Technical Education Act of
15 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2355(b)(3)).

16 (4) Efforts to recruit and retain faculty and
17 other instructional staff.

18 (f) PERMISSIVE USE OF FUNDS.—From the total
19 amount appropriated to carry out this Act for a fiscal year
20 and not reserved under section 4 or subsection (d), the
21 Secretary may set aside—

22 (1) not more than 5 percent for administration,
23 capacity building, research, evaluation, and report-
24 ing; and

1 (2) not more than 2 percent for technical as-
2 sistance to eligible entities and eligible Indian enti-
3 ties.

4 (g) EVALUATIONS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of improv-
6 ing the effectiveness of the evidence-based reforms
7 and practices carried out by eligible entities and eli-
8 gible Indian entities pursuant to a grant under this
9 Act, the Secretary shall make grants to or enter into
10 contracts with 1 or more organizations to—

11 (A) evaluate the effectiveness of such evi-
12 dence-based reforms and practices; and

13 (B) disseminate information on the impact
14 of such evidence-based reforms and practices in
15 increasing completion and retention activities of
16 students, as well as other appropriate measures.

17 (2) ISSUES TO BE EVALUATED.—The evalua-
18 tions required under paragraph (1) shall measure
19 the effectiveness of the evidence-based reforms and
20 practices carried out by eligible entities and eligible
21 Indian entities pursuant to a grant under this sub-
22 section in—

23 (A) whether such entity implemented the
24 plans, and carried out the activities, described
25 in subsection (c); and

1 (B) comparing the completion and reten-
2 tion rates of students who participated in such
3 reforms and practices with the rates of students
4 of similar backgrounds who did not participate
5 in such reforms and practices.

6 (3) RESULTS.—Not later than 18 months after
7 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
8 shall submit a final report to the Committee on
9 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Sen-
10 ate and the Committee on Education and Workforce
11 of the House of Representatives.

12 (h) GRANT LIMIT.—An eligible entity that has
13 branch campus may only receive a grant under this Act
14 for 1 campus of the entity at a time.

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