

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4914

To strengthen and expand the Green Ribbon Schools Program at the Department of Education by boosting the capacity of participating States to expand the number of schools, applicants, and nominees engaged around environmental, environmental literacy, and environmental health goals, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 24, 2026

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. LUJÁN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To strengthen and expand the Green Ribbon Schools Program at the Department of Education by boosting the capacity of participating States to expand the number of schools, applicants, and nominees engaged around environmental, environmental literacy, and environmental health goals, 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 “Green Ribbon Act of
5 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM.**

2 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

3 (1) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “elemen-
4 tary school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary
5 school”, “Secretary”, and “State educational agen-
6 cy” have the meanings given the terms in section
7 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education
8 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

9 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
10 ty” means an elementary school, secondary school,
11 school funded or operated by the Bureau of Indian
12 Education, local educational agency, or institution of
13 higher education.

14 (3) ENVIRONMENTALLY LITERATE.—The term
15 “environmentally literate”, when used with respect
16 to an individual, means the capacity to—

17 (A) perceive and interpret the relative
18 health of environmental systems and the inter-
19 relationships between natural, economic, and
20 social systems and technology; and

21 (B) assess options and take appropriate
22 action to maintain, restore, or improve the
23 health of the environmental systems and pro-
24 mote sustainable development.

(4) GREEN RIBBON PILLARS.—The term “Green Ribbon pillars” means the following 3 inter-related aspirational goals:

(A) 100 percent of the graduates of the eligible entity or the schools served by the eligible entity are environmentally literate.

(B) The environmental impacts of the eligible entity’s buildings, grounds, and operations are targeting significant emission reductions with a long-term goal of 100 percent reduction.

(C) The eligible entity has a net positive impact on the environmental health of its students and staff.

(5) GREEN RIBBON SCHOOL AWARD WINNER.—The term “Green Ribbon School award winner” means an eligible entity that has received an award of recognition from the Department of Education for high performance in making progress toward all 3 of the Green Ribbon pillars, in accordance with subsection (b)(4).

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

1 (b) GREEN RIBBON SCHOOL PROGRAM OF THE DE-
2 PARTMENT OF EDUCATION.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
4 a program, which shall be known as the “Green Rib-
5 bon Schools Program”, to reach and engage more
6 schools by—

7 (A) encouraging eligible entities to imple-
8 ment the Green Ribbon pillars;

9 (B) recognizing high performance in the
10 Green Ribbon pillars by eligible entities,
11 through voluntary partnership with States;

12 (C) increasing the number of participating
13 local educational agencies and schools that are
14 receiving resources from the program, including
15 those not pursuing an award on the date of en-
16 actment of this Act;

17 (D) engaging with public and private
18 stakeholders to maximize positive impact; and

19 (E) supporting schools in implementing
20 measures to reduce energy and water use and
21 costs, increase resilience, increase environ-
22 mental literacy, and improve indoor air and
23 other conditions for health and wellness.

24 (2) UPDATE.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6
2 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
3 the Secretary shall conduct a review and update
4 the criteria for the Green Ribbon school award
5 winner program, including scoring, which shall
6 include—

7 (i) ensuring that health and wellness
8 criteria align with programs of the Envi-
9 ronmental Protection Agency and the Cen-
10 ters for Disease Control and Prevention
11 and are associated with benefitting student
12 health, thinking, and the ability to learn;

13 (ii) ensuring that environmental cri-
14 teria emphasize the role of schools in miti-
15 gating and adapting to climate change, in-
16 cluding school resiliency to natural disas-
17 ters; and

18 (iii) ensuring that environmental and
19 sustainability literacy criteria encourage
20 applicants to identify methods of assess-
21 ment of student knowledge and skills and
22 set goals for literacy among graduates.

23 (B) FEDERAL REGISTER.—The Secretary
24 shall publish in the Federal Register the final
25 updated criteria for the Green Ribbon school

1 award winner program and shall allow for, and
2 address, any public comments related to the up-
3 dated criteria.

4 (3) GRANTS AND AWARDS.—In conducting the
5 Green Ribbon Schools Program, the Secretary shall,
6 from the amounts made available to carry out this
7 Act—

8 (A) reserve not less than \$250,000 for the
9 Secretary of the Interior to carry out the activi-
10 ties under subsection (c)(7) with respect to
11 schools operated or funded by the Bureau of In-
12 dian Education;

13 (B) award grants to State educational
14 agencies under subsection (c); and

15 (C) provide an honorarium to each Green
16 Ribbon School award winner in an amount
17 equal to \$10,000, subject to appropriations.

18 (4) STUDIES, RESEARCH, AND SURVEYS.—The
19 Secretary may conduct studies, research, and sur-
20 veys to inform the Green Ribbon Schools Program.

21 (5) GREEN RIBBON SCHOOL AWARDS.—Each
22 year, regardless of whether funds are available for
23 the honoraria described in paragraph (2)(C), the
24 Secretary shall—

25 (A) establish a process through which—

1 (i) State educational agencies may
2 nominate eligible entities for recognition of
3 high performance in making progress to-
4 ward all 3 of the Green Ribbon pillars; and

5 (ii) the Secretary of the Interior, oper-
6 ating through the Bureau of Indian Edu-
7 cation, may nominate eligible entities that
8 are schools operated or funded by the Bu-
9 reau for such recognition; and

10 (B) award the Green Ribbon School award
11 to nominated eligible entities that the Secretary
12 determines have shown high performance in
13 making progress toward all 3 of the Green Rib-
14 bon pillars.

15 (6) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall con-
16 sult with the Administrator of the Environmental
17 Protection Agency and the Director of the Centers
18 for Disease Control and Prevention to align the
19 Green Ribbon Schools Program with the science on
20 school environments and school health cited by the
21 Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers
22 for Disease Control and Prevention.

23 (7) REPORTS.—

24 (A) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than November 1, 2027, and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall publish a report describing the Green Ribbon Schools Program of the prior fiscal year.

(ii) CONTENT OF ANNUAL REPORTS.—Each annual report described in clause (i) shall—

(I) describe the activities and outcomes of the Department of Education and State grant award winners, including the uses of grant funds to reach and engage additional schools, and the successes and challenges of the Green Ribbon Schools Program;

(II) describe the plan of State grant award winners to extend opportunities to become a Green Ribbon School award winner to schools that are eligible to receive funds under part A of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq.) or other schools that are low-income schools, schools in disadvantaged or rural or

1 remote communities, or schools that
2 serve a significant number of students
3 with disabilities; and

4 (III) provide a proposed plan for
5 the following year.

6 (B) BIENNIAL REPORTS.—Not later than
7 November 1, 2028, and biennially thereafter,
8 the Secretary shall publish a report describing
9 key programs and policies of each State in sup-
10 porting its schools in making progress toward
11 all 3 of the Green Ribbon pillars.

12 (c) STATE GRANT PROGRAM.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
14 grants to State educational agencies, on a competi-
15 tive basis, for the purpose of supporting and engag-
16 ing eligible entities as green schools.

17 (2) APPLICATIONS.—A State educational agen-
18 cy that desires to receive a grant under this sub-
19 section shall submit an application to the Secretary
20 at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by
21 such information as the Secretary may require, in-
22 cluding an assurance that the agency will—

23 (A) expend not less than 40 percent of the
24 grant funds to support underresourced schools;
25 and

1 (B) provide documentation to the Sec-
2 retary demonstrating compliance with the re-
3 quirement under subparagraph (A).

4 (3) CRITERIA.—In selecting grant recipients
5 under this subsection, the Secretary shall consider
6 the State educational agency’s proposed program or
7 program expansion in terms of—

8 (A) the projected impact and proposed im-
9 pact metrics;

10 (B) the incorporation of specific activities
11 to ensure underresourced eligible entities ben-
12 efit and have opportunities to participate;

13 (C) the extent to which stakeholders and
14 partnerships are included;

15 (D) innovative approaches to scaling green
16 school practices and learning;

17 (E) the engagement of past award winners
18 in the program, including as mentors or advi-
19 sors to other eligible entities; and

20 (F) other criteria as may be identified by
21 the Secretary.

22 (4) AMOUNT OF GRANTS.—In carrying out this
23 subsection, the Secretary may determine the amount
24 of each grant award, except that no grant award

1 shall be for an amount that is less than \$250,000
2 nor more than \$1,000,000.

3 (5) TIME PERIOD.—Grant funds awarded under
4 this subsection shall be available for use by the
5 grant awardee for not more than 3 years.

6 (6) ALLOWED USES.—A State educational
7 agency that receives a grant under this subsection
8 shall use the grant funds to increase and support eli-
9 gible entities in becoming Green Ribbon School
10 award winners, including by—

11 (A) establishing State-level Green Ribbon
12 awards and recognition events;

13 (B) working in partnership with nonprofit
14 green school organizations and other organiza-
15 tions, utilities, businesses, and other State and
16 local governmental entities to inform, educate,
17 and support eligible entities regarding actions
18 to make progress toward all 3 of the Green Rib-
19 bon pillars;

20 (C) using resources from the Department
21 of Education and its green schools partners, as
22 appropriate, to curate and disseminate re-
23 sources about best green school practices and
24 provide statewide training and professional de-
25 velopment in the Green Ribbon pillars;

- 1 (D) utilizing innovative ways to promote—
 2 (i) the implementation of green school
 3 practices; and
 4 (ii) the Green Ribbon Schools Pro-
 5 gram and any State-level Green Ribbon
 6 schools program; and
 7 (E) providing statewide training and pro-
 8 fessional development in the Green Ribbon pil-
 9 lars.

10 **SEC. 3. INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES**

11 **GREEN RIBBON AWARD PROGRAM.**

12 (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to de-
 13 velop and implement a Green Ribbon award program for
 14 nonformal learning institutions at the Institute of Museum
 15 and Library Services in order to recognize and help ad-
 16 vance excellence in the greening of nonformal learning in-
 17 stitutions.

18 (b) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “non-
 19 formal learning institutions” includes public and private
 20 libraries, museums, arboretums, botanical gardens, nature
 21 centers, historical societies, historic preservation organiza-
 22 tions, history museums, science and technology centers,
 23 planetariums, children’s museums, art museums, general
 24 museums, natural history museums, natural science muse-
 25 ums, zoos, aquariums, and wildlife conservation centers.

1 (c) ESTABLISHMENT.—Consistent with section 209
2 of the Museum and Library Services Act (20 U.S.C.
3 9107), the Director of the Institute of Museum and Li-
4 brary Services shall establish an award program for non-
5 formal learning institutions modeled on the Department
6 of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools Program. The award
7 program shall recognize and honor nonformal learning in-
8 stitutions that demonstrate high achievement in all 3 of
9 the following goals:

10 (1) Ensuring that their visitors are exposed
11 through multiple learning modes to locally relevant
12 information to advance understanding of the inter-
13 connection of the natural environment, built environ-
14 ment, and quality of life.

15 (2) Significantly reducing their net environ-
16 mental and carbon footprints, while using their own
17 built and natural environment as a learning labora-
18 tory and a model of best practice for their host com-
19 munity.

20 (3) Ensuring their institution has a net positive
21 environmental impact on visitor and staff health.

22 (d) AWARD.—The Director of the Institute of Mu-
23 seum and Library Services shall provide each national
24 award winner under this section with an honorarium of
25 \$10,000.

1 (e) CONSULTATION.—The Director of the Institute of
 2 Museum and Library Services shall consult with the Ad-
 3 ministrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and
 4 the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-
 5 vention to align the award program under this section with
 6 the science on school health studied by the Environmental
 7 Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control
 8 and Prevention.

9 **SEC. 4. OFFICE OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUS-**
 10 **TAINABILITY WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE**
 11 **SECRETARY OF EDUCATION.**

12 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within
 13 the Office of the Secretary of Education, the Office of
 14 School Infrastructure and Sustainability that shall be
 15 composed of 3 full-time employees.

16 (b) PURPOSE.—The Office of School Infrastructure
 17 and Sustainability shall—

18 (1) direct content and programming of a tech-
 19 nical assistance center for school infrastructure;

20 (2) liaise with partner Federal agencies that
 21 have programs, grants, and equities in school facili-
 22 ties, promote the National Clearinghouse’s resources
 23 to schools, provide robust technical assistance to
 24 partner Federal agencies, local educational agencies,
 25 and State educational agencies, and oversee, pro-

1 mote, and expand the recognition award for the
2 Green Ribbon Schools Program;

3 (3) provide technical assistance, training, and,
4 subject to appropriations, grants to State edu-
5 cational agencies and local educational agencies on
6 issues related to educational facility planning, de-
7 sign, financing, construction, improvement, oper-
8 ation, and maintenance, including green building de-
9 sign and operation practices consistent with a com-
10 mitment to tackling the climate crisis;

11 (4) develop resources and assemble best prac-
12 tices on issues related to ensuring equitable access
13 to healthy, educationally adequate, and environ-
14 mentally and fiscally sustainable public school facili-
15 ties and grounds;

16 (5) recommend revisions to regulations of the
17 Department of Education that pertain to school con-
18 struction and renovation; and

19 (6) consult with Federal agencies to ensure
20 peer-reviewed recommendations and resources are
21 incorporated into the work of the Office of School
22 Infrastructure and Sustainability.

23 (c) APPROPRIATION.—There is authorized to be ap-
24 propriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for fiscal
25 year 2027.

1 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
3 priated to carry out this Act (except for section 4)
4 \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2027 and such sums as may
5 be necessary for each of fiscal years 2028 through 2032.

6 (b) RESERVATIONS.—The Secretary—

7 (1) shall reserve 10 percent of the amount ap-
8 propriated under subsection (a) to carry out section
9 3; and

10 (2) may reserve not more than 5 percent of the
11 amount appropriated to carry out this Act for a fis-
12 cal year for administrative expenses.

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