

teachers earning licenses has fallen by over 100,000. We cannot afford to neglect the educator workforce any longer.

History shows that the Nation can rise to this challenge. Following the launch of Sputnik in 1957, Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act of 1958 that invested in math, science, and foreign language instruction and the teaching workforce to deliver it. With the rise of new technologies and artificial intelligence, we need that kind of effort today to ensure American students have professional educators that can teach the skills students will need to thrive in a changing environment. In February, a coalition of education organizations came together with a call to action to change the trajectory of the education profession through Federal leadership and systemic accountability, investing in innovation and sustainability, making the education profession an affordable career path, and advancing research and evidence to guide the future of learning.

The Quality Educator Partnership Act is the legislative plan to answer the call to action. Our legislation calls for a comprehensive national strategy to recruit, prepare, retain, and advance high-quality educators from early childhood through secondary education led by a dedicated Office of Educator Workforce at the U.S. Department of Education. It calls for \$500 million annual investment in partnerships between school districts and educator preparation programs to address local workforce needs. It includes \$500 million for grants to States to design and implement educator workforce strategies. Our bill creates a new National Educator Service Corps that will cover the cost of tuition and living expenses for prospective teachers who agree to teach in high-need areas. Additionally, the Quality Educator Partnership Act calls for new investments in data collection and accountability to track the state of the educator workforce and equitable access to profession-ready educators. It also calls for new investments in research and development to prepare for the future of teaching.

The Quality Educator Partnership Act reflects input from stakeholders across the field about what is needed to recruit, prepare, and support educators. To date, more than two dozen organizations have endorsed it, including the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, City Teaching Alliance, Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child, International Society for Transforming Education, National Association for School-University Partnerships, National Center for Teacher Residencies, InnovateEDU, National Principals Association, Council for Academic Deans of Research Education Institutions, National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement, Deans for Impact,

National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs, 1890 Universities Foundation, ETS, Thurgood Marshall College Fund, Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities, National Association for Music Education, ACTFL, National Center for Learning Disabilities, AILACTE, AMLE, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Council of Teachers of English, UNCF, Teach Plus, and American Library Association.

The Nation's outlook for the future is tied to the strength of the education profession. Our economic prosperity, the health of our democracy and civic society, and our ability to meet the challenges of climate change and the information age depend on our students having access to well-prepared and supported educators who reflect the diversity of the students they serve.

Today, the profession is in crisis. It is time to act. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Quality Educator Partnership Act and work with me to see that it is enacted into law.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. MERKLEY):

S. 5558. A bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a grant program to facilitate the installation of evidence-based suicide deterrents, including suicide prevention nets and barriers, on certain infrastructure, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise to introduce the bipartisan Barriers to Suicide Act. This legislation would establish competitive grants to help State and local governments fund nets and barriers that have been shown to reduce suicide on bridges and other high-risk infrastructure.

This bipartisan bill would establish a grant program for States and localities to apply for Federal funding under the National Highway Performance Program to install nets, barriers, and other evidence-based suicide deterrents on bridges, buildings, parking garages, highway-rail grade crossings, and at rail stations.

This bill would also authorize a study to identify the types of structures most commonly used for suicide attempts, types of barriers that are most effective in prevention, and additional strategies to reduce jumping deaths.

The CDC estimated that about 12.8 million people seriously thought about suicide, 3.7 million made a plan, and 1.5 million attempted suicide in 2023. There were over 49,000 deaths from suicide in 2023 and between 2010 and 2020, 11,154 Americans lost their lives through suicide-by-jumping.

Research shows that physical barriers on bridges and high structures can reduce suicide deaths at those sites by up to 90 percent.

States and localities should have access to a grant program that allows

them to proactively prevent suicide-by-jumping by building safety nets and barriers on bridges, buildings, parking garages, and at rail stations and highway-rail grade rail crossings, with the goal of preventing suicides.

I would like to thank Senator TILLIS for introducing this important legislation with me, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact the Barriers to Suicide Act as soon as possible.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. HIRONO, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 5559. A bill to provide for the basic needs of students at institutions of higher education; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the Basic Assistance for Students in College Act or the BASIC Act, which I introduced today.

I know how important it is to help students cover the full cost of attending college, including tuition and fees, housing, food, transportation, books, childcare, healthcare, supplies, and more.

According to the Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, three in five college students experience food and housing insecurity. We also know that rates of basic needs insecurity are much higher for historically marginalized students, including Black, Latino, and indigenous students; parenting students; LGBTQIA+ students; first-generation students; Pell Grant recipients; former foster youth; and justice-involved students.

Our Nation's college students shouldn't have to worry about going hungry or having a roof over their heads. Yet far too many do, and basic needs will be out of reach for millions more students due to the One Big Beautiful Act, which cut food assistance, healthcare coverage, and access to financial aid.

The evidence is clear that addressing students' basic needs prevents students from having to sacrifice their health and well-being in order to succeed in higher education.

That is why I am proud to introduce this bill to authorize \$1 billion for a new grant program to help institutions of higher education meet students' basic needs. This funding represents an essential aspect of building more equitable paths to higher education, and it represents an investment in our students, our institutions, and our future. The legislation also helps coordinate assistance across Federal Agency lines.

I want to thank Senator WARREN and Representative TORRES for introducing this bill with me, and I hope our colleagues will join us in support of this bill that ensures no student is forced to choose between their education and their basic needs.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. KING, Ms. HIRONO,