

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 887

To provide for Project GRAD programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 7, 2007

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York (for herself and Ms. PRYCE of Ohio) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To provide for Project GRAD 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 “Graduation Really
5 Achieves Dreams Act” or the “GRAD Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) The national secondary school graduation
9 rate is only 70 percent. For the class of 2001, the
10 national graduation rate was only 51 percent for Af-

1 rican-American students and 52 percent for Latino
2 students.

3 (2) In our nation’s high poverty urban districts,
4 as few as one-third of students graduate from sec-
5 ondary school. In these places, completion rates
6 among certain disadvantaged groups of students are
7 often lower still.

8 (3) In rural areas, where one-third of American
9 students attend school, only 58.8 percent of students
10 attend institutions of higher education, compared
11 with 68.2 percent of American students from urban
12 and suburban areas.

13 (4) Each school day, approximately 7,000 sec-
14 ondary school students drop out of school.

15 (5) The 6,000,000 secondary students who
16 make up the lowest 25 percent in terms of achieve-
17 ment scores are 3.5 times more likely to drop out
18 than students in the next highest quarter of aca-
19 demic achievement, and are 20 times more likely to
20 drop out than high achieving students.

21 (6) Approximately 25 percent of secondary
22 school students are reading at “below basic” levels.
23 The problem is even more severe for poor students
24 of color. The average minority or low-income ninth

1 grader performs at only the fifth or sixth grade level
2 in reading.

3 (7) Achievement gaps persist across racial and
4 socioeconomic lines in rural schools—there are
5 2,500,000 poor children in rural areas, and the child
6 poverty rate in some rural areas is 2 to 3 times the
7 national average.

8 (8) Recruiting and retaining good teachers is
9 an enormous challenge in rural areas: the average
10 salary in rural districts is 13.4 percent lower than
11 in nonrural areas; and teachers often teach more
12 than 1 subject, teach in poor working conditions, live
13 far from colleges, have little access to training, and
14 face geographic and social isolation.

15 (9) Low graduation rates and college attend-
16 ance rates are evidence that, in the earlier grades,
17 schools are not meeting the fundamental achieve-
18 ment needs of low-income, minority, and rural stu-
19 dents.

20 (10) Even those students who do graduate from
21 secondary schools and go on to college are struggling
22 because they lack the basic skills to succeed. Ap-
23 proximately 40 percent of all 4-year college students
24 take a remedial course and 63 percent of all commu-

1 nity college students are assigned to at least 1 reme-
2 dial course.

3 (11) A small percentage of low-income students
4 who manage to enter college are able to complete a
5 degree. Of students from families in the bottom 20
6 percent in terms of income who enter college, only
7 27 percent go on to complete a 2- or 4-year college
8 degree within 8 years.

9 (12) Graduation rates impact early drop-out
10 rates in the military. The attrition rates in the mili-
11 tary of both individuals who are not secondary
12 school graduates and GED recipients are 8 percent-
13 age points higher than the attrition rate of sec-
14 ondary school graduates. As a result, the Armed
15 Services no longer accepts secondary school dropouts
16 and puts less value on alternative certificates.

17 (13) Students who fail to graduate from sec-
18 ondary school are more likely to engage in criminal
19 activity than students who graduate. A 1-percent in-
20 crease in secondary school graduation rates would
21 save approximately \$1,400,000,000 in costs associ-
22 ated with incarceration, or about \$2,100 for each
23 male secondary school graduate.

24 (14) In today's workplace, nearly 8 in 10 adults
25 with baccalaureate degrees are employed, but for

1 those who completed secondary school only, the
2 number falls to about 6 in 10. For students who
3 dropped out of secondary school, the number drops
4 further to 4 in 10.

5 (15) Employment projections indicate that jobs
6 requiring only a secondary school degree will grow
7 by just 9 percent by the year 2008, while those jobs
8 requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25 percent
9 and those jobs requiring an associate's degree will
10 grow by 31 percent.

11 (16) Increasing minority students' enrollment
12 in college to the same proportion as white students
13 would generate an additional \$231 billion in GDP
14 and at least \$80 million in tax revenues.

15 (17) Personalization of the school environment
16 has been proven to increase success rates for low-
17 performing secondary school students. Nearly 50
18 percent of middle school youth and 40 percent of
19 secondary school youth report feelings of disengage-
20 ment from school. Rates are even higher for teens
21 and minorities in urban schools. These feelings re-
22 sult in failure to work hard, to seek assistance, or
23 to take appropriate courses.

24 (18) Effective research-based education pro-
25 grams that improve secondary school graduation

1 rates are comprehensive in nature and include inter-
2 ventions that begin in kindergarten or earlier and
3 span all the grades through grade 12.

4 **SEC. 3. PROJECT GRAD.**

5 (a) **PURPOSES.**—The purposes of this Act are—

6 (1) to provide support and assistance to pro-
7 grams implementing integrated education reform
8 services in order to improve secondary school grad-
9 uation and college attendance and completion rates
10 for disadvantaged students; and

11 (2) to promote the establishment of new pro-
12 grams to implement such integrated education re-
13 form services.

14 (b) **GRANT AUTHORIZED.**—The Secretary is author-
15 ized to award a grant to Project GRAD USA (referred
16 to in this Act as the “grantee”), a nonprofit educational
17 organization that has as its primary purpose the improve-
18 ment of secondary school graduation and college attend-
19 ance and completion rates for disadvantaged students, to
20 implement and sustain the integrated education reform
21 services described in subsection (d)(3) at existing Project
22 GRAD program sites and to promote the expansion of
23 such programs to new sites.

1 (c) REQUIREMENTS OF GRANT AGREEMENT.—The
2 Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the grantee
3 that requires that the grantee shall—

4 (1) enter into subcontracts with nonprofit edu-
5 cational organizations that serve a substantial num-
6 ber or percentage of low-income students (referred
7 to in this Act as “subcontractors”), under which the
8 subcontractors agree to implement the programs de-
9 scribed in subsection (d) and provide matching funds
10 for such programs;

11 (2) directly carry out—

12 (A) activities to implement and sustain the
13 literacy, mathematics, classroom management,
14 social service, and college access programs fur-
15 ther described in subsection (d)(3);

16 (B) activities to build the organizational
17 and management capacity of the subcontractors
18 to effectively implement and sustain the pro-
19 grams;

20 (C) activities for the purpose of improving
21 and expanding the programs, including but not
22 limited to activities to further articulate a pro-
23 gram for one or more grade levels and across
24 grade levels, to tailor a program for a particular

1 target audience, and provide tighter integration
2 across programs;

3 (D) activities for the purpose of imple-
4 menting new Project GRAD program sites;

5 (E) activities for the purpose of promoting
6 greater public awareness of integrated edu-
7 cation reform services to improve secondary
8 school graduation and college attendance rates
9 for disadvantaged students; and

10 (F) other activities directly related to im-
11 proving secondary school graduation and college
12 attendance and completion rates for disadvan-
13 taged students; and

14 (3) use grant funds available under this act to
15 pay—

16 (A) the amount determined under sub-
17 section (f)(1); and

18 (B) costs associated with carrying out the
19 activities and providing the services, as provided
20 in paragraph (2) of this subsection.

21 (d) SUPPORTED PROGRAMS.—

22 (1) DESIGNATION.—The subcontractor pro-
23 grams referred to in subsection (c)(1) shall be
24 known as “Project GRAD programs”.

1 (2) FEEDER PATTERNS.—Each subcontractor
2 shall implement a Project GRAD program and shall,
3 with the agreement of the grantee—

4 (A) identify or establish not less than one
5 “feeder pattern” of public schools, where “feed-
6 er pattern” is defined as a high school and the
7 elementary schools and middle schools that
8 channel students into that high school; and

9 (B) provide the integrated educational re-
10 form services described in paragraph (3) at the
11 identified feeder pattern or feeder patterns.

12 (3) INTEGRATED EDUCATION REFORM SERV-
13 ICES.—The services provided through a Project
14 GRAD program may include—

15 (A) research-based programs in reading,
16 mathematics, and classroom management; and

17 (B) campus-based social services programs,
18 including a systematic approach to increase
19 family and community involvement in the
20 schools served by the Project GRAD program;

21 (C) a college access program that in-
22 cludes—

23 (i) providing college scholarships for
24 students who meet established criteria;

1 (ii) proven approaches for increasing
2 student and family college awareness; and

3 (iii) assistance for such students in
4 applying for higher education financial aid;
5 and

6 (D) such other services identified by the
7 grantee as necessary to increase secondary
8 school graduation and college attendance and
9 completion rates.

10 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—Of the funds made available
11 under this Act, not more than 8 percent of such funds,
12 or \$4,000,000, whichever is less, shall be used by the
13 grantee to pay for administration of the grant, with the
14 remainder of funds to be used for the purposes described
15 in subsections (c)(1) and (2).

16 (f) GRANTEE CONTRIBUTION AND MATCHING RE-
17 QUIREMENT.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall provide to
19 each subcontractor an average of \$200 for each
20 pupil served by the subcontractor in the Project
21 GRAD program, adjusted to take into consider-
22 ation—

23 (A) the resources available in the area
24 where the subcontractor will implement the
25 Project GRAD program; and

1 (B) the need for Project GRAD programs
2 in such area to improve student outcomes.

3 (2) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—Each subcon-
4 tractor shall provide funds for the Project GRAD
5 program in an amount that is equal to the amount
6 received by the subcontractor from the grantee.
7 Such matching funds may be provided in cash or in
8 kind, fairly evaluated.

9 (3) WAIVER AUTHORITY.—The grantee may
10 waive, in whole or in part, the requirement of sub-
11 section (f)(2) for a subcontractor, if the subcon-
12 tractor—

13 (A) demonstrates that it would not other-
14 wise be able to participate in the program; and

15 (B) enters into an agreement with the
16 grantee with respect to the amount to which the
17 waiver will apply.

18 (4) DECREASE IN GRANTEE SHARE.—Based on
19 the funds or resources available to a subcontractor,
20 the grantee may elect to provide the subcontractor
21 with an amount that is less than the amount deter-
22 mined under paragraph (1).

23 (g) EVALUATION.—

24 (1) EVALUATION BY THE SECRETARY.—The
25 Secretary shall select an independent entity to evalu-

1 ate, every 3 years, the performance of students who
2 participate in a Project GRAD program under this
3 Act. The evaluation shall—

4 (A) be conducted using the strongest possible
5 research design for determining the effectiveness
6 of the Project GRAD programs funded
7 under this Act; and

8 (B) compare reading and mathematics
9 achievement and, where applicable, the secondary
10 school graduation, college attendance,
11 and college completion rates of students who
12 participate in a Project GRAD program funded
13 under this Act with those indicators for students
14 of similar backgrounds who do not participate
15 in such programs.

16 (2) EVALUATION BY GRANTEE AND SUB-
17 CONTRACTORS.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall re-
19 quire each subcontractor to prepare an in-depth
20 report of the results and the use of funds of
21 each Project GRAD program funded under this
22 Act that includes—

23 (i) data on the reading and mathe-
24 matics achievement of students involved in
25 the Project GRAD program;

1 (ii) statistics on secondary school
2 graduation, college attendance, and college
3 completion rates; and

4 (iii) such financial reporting as re-
5 quired by the Secretary to review the effec-
6 tiveness and efficiency of the program.

7 (B) FORM OF REPORT.—The report shall
8 be in a form and include such content as shall
9 be determined by the grantee, in consultation
10 with the Secretary or the entity selected by the
11 Secretary to evaluate the Project GRAD pro-
12 grams in accordance with paragraph (1).

13 (3) AVAILABILITY OF EVALUATIONS.—Copies of
14 any evaluation or report prepared under this sub-
15 section shall be made available to—

16 (A) the Secretary;

17 (B) the chairperson and ranking member
18 of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
19 and Pensions of the Senate; and

20 (C) the chairperson and ranking member
21 of the Committee on Education and the Work-
22 force of the House of Representatives.

23 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

24 In this Act:

1 (1) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL; SECONDARY
2 SCHOOL.—The terms “elementary school” and “sec-
3 ondary school” have the meanings given such terms
4 in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary
5 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

6 (2) LOW-INCOME STUDENT.—The term “low-in-
7 come student” means a student who is determined
8 by a local educational agency to be from a low-in-
9 come family using the measures described in section
10 1113(a)(5) of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
11 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6313(a)(5)).

12 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
13 the Secretary of Education.

14 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

15 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
16 this Act \$27,000,000 for fiscal year 2008, and such sums
17 as are necessary for each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years.

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