

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2580

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve the participation in higher education of, and to increase opportunities in employment for, residents of rural areas.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 30, 2008

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

A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to improve the participation in higher education of, and to increase opportunities in employment for, residents of rural areas.

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 “College and University
5 Rural Education Act of 2008” (CURE Act).

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.**

7 The Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001
8 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“TITLE VIII—RURAL DEVELOP-**
 2 **MENT GRANTS FOR RURAL**
 3 **COLLEGES AND UNIVER-**
 4 **SITIES**

5 **“SEC. 801. PURPOSE.**

6 “The purposes of this title are—

7 “(1) to increase—

8 “(A) enrollment and graduation rates in
 9 and from 2-year and 4-year colleges, and ar-
 10 ticulation from 2-year degree programs into 4-
 11 year degree programs, with respect to graduates
 12 of rural secondary schools; and

13 “(B) degree completion for nontraditional
 14 students from rural areas; and

15 “(2) to promote economic growth and develop-
 16 ment in rural America through assistance to part-
 17 nerships, rural institutions of higher education (in-
 18 cluding rural community colleges), and other enti-
 19 ties, such as local educational agencies, employers,
 20 education service agencies, and nonprofit organiza-
 21 tions.

22 **“SEC. 802. DEFINITIONS.**

23 “In this title:

24 “(1) **NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT.**—The term
 25 ‘nontraditional student’ means an individual who—

1 “(A) delays enrollment in an institution of
2 higher education by 3 or more years after com-
3 pleting secondary school;

4 “(B) attends an institution of higher edu-
5 cation part-time or less than part-time; or

6 “(C) attends an institution of higher edu-
7 cation and—

8 “(i) works full time;

9 “(ii) is an independent student;

10 “(iii) has 1 or more dependents other
11 than a spouse;

12 “(iv) is a single parent; or

13 “(v) does not have a secondary school
14 diploma or a general equivalency diploma
15 (GED).

16 “(2) RURAL AREA.—The term ‘rural area’
17 means an area in which there is located a rural local
18 educational agency.

19 “(3) REGIONAL EMPLOYER.—The term ‘re-
20 gional employer’ means an employer that is a busi-
21 ness or other entity employing individuals within a
22 rural area.

23 “(4) RURAL INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-
24 CATION.—The term ‘rural institution of higher edu-
25 cation’ means an institution of higher education (as

1 such term is defined in section 101) that primarily
 2 serves rural areas.

3 “(5) RURAL LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

4 The term ‘rural local educational agency’ means a
 5 local educational agency that is designated with a
 6 metrocentric locale code of 41, 42, or 43 as deter-
 7 mined by the National Center for Education Statis-
 8 tics (hereafter in this paragraph referred to as the
 9 ‘NCES’), in conjunction with the Bureau of the
 10 Census, using the NCES system for classifying local
 11 educational agencies.

12 **“SEC. 803. ENSURING COLLEGE ACCESS FOR RURAL SEC-**
 13 **ONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES.**

14 “(a) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—In
 15 this section the term ‘eligible partnership’ means a part-
 16 nership formed between or among—

17 “(1) 1 or more rural institutions of higher edu-
 18 cation; and

19 “(2) any of the following entities:

20 “(A) One or more rural local educational
 21 agencies.

22 “(B) One or more rural education service
 23 agencies.

24 “(C) One or more regional employers.

1 “(D) One or more nonprofit organizations
2 with expertise in rural education.

3 “(b) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is au-
4 thorized to award grants to eligible partnerships to enable
5 the eligible partnerships to carry out the authorized activi-
6 ties described in subsection (d).

7 “(c) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant
8 under this section, an eligible partnership shall submit to
9 the Secretary an application in such form and containing
10 such information as the Secretary shall prescribe.

11 “(d) AWARD CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining
12 which applications to approve for a grant under this sec-
13 tion, the Secretary shall consider—

14 “(1) the percentage of graduates, attendees, or
15 former attendees of secondary schools from rural
16 local educational agencies who are enrolled or other-
17 wise affiliated with the rural institution of higher
18 education participating in the eligible partnership;
19 and

20 “(2) in the case of employers, the percentage of
21 employees of the employer who are graduates of sec-
22 ondary schools served by a rural local educational
23 agency.

24 “(e) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—Grant funds made
25 available under this section shall be used—

1 “(1) to improve enrollment rates at rural insti-
2 tutions of higher education, for graduates and
3 former attendees of rural secondary schools, includ-
4 ing—

5 “(A) programs to provide information
6 about college costs and financial aid options, as-
7 sistance with college enrollment applications,
8 and assistance with financial aid applications;

9 “(B) programs or initiatives that provide
10 such graduates and attendees access and expo-
11 sure to campuses, classes, programs, and facili-
12 ties of rural institutions of higher education, in-
13 cluding covering the cost of transportation to
14 and from rural institutions of higher education;

15 “(C) the formation of groups or other ini-
16 tiatives that create support groups of such
17 graduates and attendees expressing interest in
18 attending rural institutions of higher education;

19 “(D) extra curricular activities, such as in-
20 ternships, community service, and other activi-
21 ties for such graduates and attendees in ad-
22 vance of attending rural institutions of higher
23 education; and

24 “(E) other initiatives that assist such
25 graduates and attendees in applying for admis-

1 sion to and developing interest in attending
 2 rural institutions of higher education; and

3 “(2) to encourage participation of nontradi-
 4 tional students in degree programs at rural institu-
 5 tions of higher education, including—

6 “(A) programs to provide information
 7 about college costs and financial aid options, as-
 8 sistance with college enrollment applications,
 9 and assistance with financial aid applications
 10 for rural institutions of higher education;

11 “(B) outreach to nontraditional students
 12 through community initiatives; and

13 “(C) formation of support groups for non-
 14 traditional students enrolling in 2-year degree
 15 programs and articulating from 2-year degree
 16 programs to 4-year degree programs.

17 **“SEC. 804. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS.**

18 “(a) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP DEFINED.—In this
 19 section the term ‘eligible partnership’ means a partnership
 20 formed between or among—

21 “(1) 1 or more rural institutions of higher edu-
 22 cation; and

23 “(2) 1 or more regional employers.

24 “(b) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is au-
 25 thorized to award grants to eligible partnerships to enable

1 the eligible partnerships to carry out the authorized activi-
 2 ties described in subsection (e).

3 “(c) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant
 4 under this section, an eligible partnership shall submit to
 5 the Secretary an application in such form and containing
 6 such information as the Secretary shall prescribe.

7 “(d) AWARD CONSIDERATIONS.—In determining
 8 which applications to approve for a grant under this sec-
 9 tion, the Secretary shall consider—

10 “(1) the potential of the regional employer par-
 11 ticipating in the eligible partnership to employ grad-
 12 uates of rural institutions of higher education after
 13 graduation;

14 “(2) the potential of the regional employer par-
 15 ticipating in the eligible partnership to spur eco-
 16 nomic development in the region; and

17 “(3) the relevance of the regional employer par-
 18 ticipating in the eligible partnership to the regional
 19 economy.

20 “(e) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—Grant funds made
 21 available under this section shall be used—

22 “(1) to provide additional career training to
 23 attendees of rural institutions of higher education in
 24 fields relevant to the regional economy; and

1 “(2) to encourage regional businesses to employ
2 graduates of rural institutions of higher education.

3 **“SEC. 805. QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL AREAS.**

4 “(a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary is au-
5 thorized to award grants to rural institutions of higher
6 education to enable the rural institutions of higher edu-
7 cation to carry out the authorized activities described in
8 subsection (b).

9 “(b) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—Grant funds made
10 available under this section shall be used to create or
11 strengthen academic programs to prepare graduates of the
12 rural institutions of higher education to enter into high-
13 need occupations in the regional and local economies.

14 **“SEC. 806. ADMINISTRATION.**

15 “(a) GRANT CONSIDERATIONS.—In awarding grants
16 under this title to eligible partnerships and rural institu-
17 tions of higher education, the Secretary shall consider—

18 “(1) the percentage of graduates of rural sec-
19 ondary schools attending rural institutions of higher
20 education in proximity to the eligible partnership or
21 rural institution of higher education receiving the
22 grant;

23 “(2) employment needs of regional employers in
24 proximity to the eligible partnership or rural institu-
25 tion of higher education receiving the grant; and

1 “(3) the health of the regional economy of the
2 region surrounding the eligible partnership or rural
3 institution of higher education receiving the grant.

4 “(b) MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—Each grant
5 awarded by the Secretary under this title shall be in an
6 amount that is not more than \$500,000.

7 “(c) GRANT DURATION.—A grant under this title
8 shall be awarded for one 3-year period.

9 **“SEC. 807. GAO STUDY.**

10 “(a) STUDY.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General
12 shall carry out a study, that shall be completed not
13 later than 5 years after the date of enactment of the
14 College and University Rural Education Act of
15 2008, to identify the challenges and solutions to in-
16 creasing the availability of and access to 2-year and
17 4-year degree programs and institutions of higher
18 education in rural America.

19 “(2) MATTERS STUDIED.—The study shall in-
20 vestigate matters related to—

21 “(A) the number of 4-year institutions of
22 higher education and 4-year degree programs in
23 rural America in existence on the date of enact-
24 ment of the College and University Rural Edu-
25 cation Act of 2008;

1 “(B) access to 4-year degree programs and
2 institutions of higher education in rural Amer-
3 ica;

4 “(C) the cost, availability of resources, and
5 challenges associated with the establishment
6 and expansion of 4-year degree programs in
7 rural America; and

8 “(D) the role of rural America in contrib-
9 uting to overall bachelor’s degree attainment in
10 the United States, as a measure of United
11 States global competitiveness.

12 “(b) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Comptroller General
13 shall make recommendations to Congress regarding the
14 matters studied under subsection (a).

15 **“SEC. 808. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

16 ““There are authorized to be appropriated—

17 “(1) for fiscal year 2009—

18 “(A) \$15,000,000 to carry out section 803;

19 “(B) \$10,000,000 to carry out section 804;

20 and

21 “(C) \$5,000,000 to carry out section 805;

22 and

1 “(2) such sums as may be necessary for each
2 of the 4 succeeding fiscal years to carry out sections
3 803, 804, and 805.”.

○