

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3326

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to local educational agencies to improve college access.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 24 (legislative day, JULY 23), 2008

Mr. DURBIN 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 local educational agencies to improve college access.

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 “Pathways to College
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) An educated workforce is crucial to the suc-
9 cess of the United States economy. Access to higher
10 education for all students is critical to maintaining

1 an educated workforce. More than 80 percent of the
 2 23,000,000 jobs that will be created in the next 10
 3 years will require postsecondary education. Only 36
 4 percent of all 18- to 24-year olds are currently en-
 5 rolled in postsecondary education.

6 (2) Workers with bachelor's degrees earn on av-
 7 erage \$17,000 more annually than workers with only
 8 high school diplomas. Workers who earn bachelor's
 9 degrees can be expected to earn \$1,000,000 more
 10 over a lifetime than those who only finished high
 11 school.

12 (3) The ACT recommends that schools—

13 (A) provide student guidance to engage
 14 students in college and career awareness; and

15 (B) ensure that students enroll in a rig-
 16 orous curriculum to prepare for postsecondary
 17 education.

18 (4) The Department of Education reports that
 19 the average student-to-counselor ratio in high
 20 schools is 315:1. This falls far above the ratio rec-
 21 ommended by the American School Counselor Asso-
 22 ciation, which is 250:1. While school counselors at
 23 private schools spend an average of 58 percent of
 24 their time on postsecondary education counseling,
 25 counselors in public schools spend an average of 25

1 percent of their time on postsecondary education
2 counseling.

3 (5) While just 57 percent of students from the
4 lowest income quartile enroll in college, 87 percent
5 of students from the top income quartile enroll. Of
6 students who were in eighth grade in 2000, only 20
7 percent of the lowest-income students are projected
8 to attain a bachelor's degree by 2012, compared to
9 68 percent of the highest income group, according to
10 the Advisory Committee on Student Financial As-
11 sistance in 2006.

12 (6) A recent report by the Consortium on Chi-
13 cago School Research found that only 41 percent of
14 Chicago public school students who aspire to go to
15 college took the steps necessary to apply to and en-
16 roll in a 4-year institution of higher education. The
17 report also reveals that only $\frac{1}{3}$ of Chicago students
18 who want to attend a 4-year institution of higher
19 education enroll in a school that matches their quali-
20 fications. Even among students qualified to attend a
21 selective college, 29 percent enrolled in a community
22 college or did not enroll at all.

23 (7) The Consortium found that many Chicago
24 public school students do not complete the Free Ap-
25 plication for Federal Student Aid, even though stu-

1 dents who apply for Federal financial aid are 50
 2 percent more likely to enroll in college. Sixty-five
 3 percent of public secondary school counselors at low-
 4 income schools believe that students and parents are
 5 discouraged from considering college as an option
 6 due to lack of knowledge about financial aid.

7 (8) Low-income and first-generation families
 8 often overestimate the cost of tuition and underesti-
 9 mate available aid; students from these backgrounds
 10 have access to fewer college application resources
 11 and financial aid resources than other groups, and
 12 are less likely to fulfill their postsecondary plans as
 13 a result.

14 (9) College preparation intervention programs
 15 can double the college-going rates for at-risk youth,
 16 can expand students' educational aspirations, and
 17 can boost college enrollment and graduation rates.

18 **SEC. 3. GRANT PROGRAM.**

19 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

20 (1) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “local
 21 educational agency” and “Secretary” have the
 22 meanings given the terms in section 9101 of the Ele-
 23 mentary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20
 24 U.S.C. 7801).

1 (2) ELIGIBLE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

2 The term “eligible local educational agency” means
3 a local educational agency in which a majority of the
4 secondary schools served by the agency are high-
5 need secondary schools.

6 (3) HIGH-NEED SECONDARY SCHOOL.—The
7 term “high-need secondary school” means a sec-
8 ondary school in which not less than 50 percent of
9 the students enrolled in the school are—

10 (A) eligible for a school lunch program
11 under the Richard B. Russell National School
12 Lunch Act;

13 (B) eligible to be counted under section
14 1124(c) of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
15 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6333(c)); or

16 (C) in families eligible for assistance under
17 the State program funded under part A of title
18 IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et
19 seq.).

20 (b) COMPETITIVE GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE LOCAL
21 EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—The Secretary is authorized
22 to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible local
23 educational agencies to carry out the activities described
24 in this section.

1 (c) DURATION.—Grants awarded under this section
2 shall be 5 years in duration.

3 (d) DISTRIBUTION.—In awarding grants under this
4 section, the Secretary shall ensure that the grants are dis-
5 tributed among the different geographic regions of the
6 United States, and among eligible local educational agen-
7 cies serving urban and rural areas.

8 (e) APPLICATIONS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible local edu-
10 cational agency desiring a grant under this section
11 shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
12 time, in such manner, and accompanied by such in-
13 formation as the Secretary may reasonably require.

14 (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted
15 under paragraph (1) shall include a description of
16 the program to be carried out with grant funds
17 and—

18 (A) a description of the secondary school
19 population to be targeted by the program, the
20 particular college-access needs of such popu-
21 lation, and the resources available for meeting
22 such needs;

23 (B) an outline of the objectives of the pro-
24 gram, including goals for increasing the number
25 of college applications submitted by each stu-

1 dent, increasing Free Application for Federal
2 Student Aid completion rates, and increasing
3 school-wide college enrollment rates across the
4 local educational agency;

5 (C) a description of the local educational
6 agency's plan to work cooperatively with pro-
7 grams funded under chapters 1 and 2 of sub-
8 part 2 of part A of title IV of the Higher Edu-
9 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–11 et seq.
10 and 1070a–21 et seq.), including the extent to
11 which the agency commits to sharing facilities,
12 providing access to students, and developing
13 compatible record-keeping systems;

14 (D) a description of the activities, services,
15 and training to be provided by the program, in-
16 cluding a plan to provide structure and support
17 for all students in the college search, planning,
18 and application process;

19 (E) a description of the methods to be
20 used to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness
21 of the program;

22 (F) an assurance that grant funds will be
23 used to supplement, and not supplant, any
24 other Federal, State, or local funds available to

1 carry out activities of the type carried out
 2 under the grant;

3 (G) an explanation of the method used for
 4 calculating college enrollment rates for each
 5 secondary school served by the eligible local
 6 educational agency that is based on externally
 7 verified data, and, when possible, aligned with
 8 existing State or local methods; and

9 (H) a plan to make the program sustain-
 10 able over time, including the use of matching
 11 funds from non-Federal sources.

12 (3) METHOD OF CALCULATING ENROLLMENT
 13 RATES.—

14 (A) IN GENERAL.—A method included in
 15 an application under paragraph (2)(G)—

16 (i) shall, at a minimum, track stu-
 17 dents' first-time enrollment in institutions
 18 of higher education; and

19 (ii) may track progress toward com-
 20 pletion of a postsecondary degree.

21 (B) DEVELOPMENT IN CONJUNCTION.—An
 22 eligible local educational agency may develop a
 23 method pursuant to paragraph (2)(G) in con-
 24 junction with an existing public or private enti-
 25 ty that currently maintains such a method.

1 (f) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.—In awarding grants
 2 under this section, the Secretary shall give special consid-
 3 eration to applications from eligible local educational
 4 agencies serving schools with the highest percentages of
 5 poverty.

6 (g) USE OF FUNDS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible local educational
 8 agency that receives a grant under this section shall
 9 develop and implement, or expand, a program to in-
 10 crease the number of low-income students who enroll
 11 in postsecondary educational institutions, including
 12 institutions with competitive admissions criteria.

13 (2) REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—Each program
 14 funded under this section shall—

15 (A) provide professional development to
 16 secondary school teachers and counselors in
 17 postsecondary education advising;

18 (B) ensure that each student has not less
 19 than 1 meeting, not later than the first semes-
 20 ter of the first year of secondary school, with a
 21 school counselor, college access personnel (in-
 22 cluding personnel involved in programs funded
 23 under chapters 1 and 2 of subpart 2 of part A
 24 of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965
 25 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–11 et seq. and 1070a–21 et

seq.)), trained teacher, or other professional or organization, such as a community-based organization, approved by the school, to discuss postsecondary options, outline postsecondary goals, and create a plan to achieve those goals;

(C) provide information to all students enrolled in the secondary schools served by the eligible local educational agency and parents beginning in the first year of secondary school on—

(i) the economic and social benefits of higher education;

(ii) college expenses, including information about expenses by institutional type, differences between sticker price and net price, and expenses beyond tuition;

(iii) paying for college, including the availability, eligibility, and variety of financial aid; and

(iv) the forms and processes associated with applying for financial aid; and

(D) ensure that each secondary school served by the eligible local educational agency develops a comprehensive, school-wide plan of

1 action to strengthen the college-going culture
2 within the school.

3 (3) ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS.—Each pro-
4 gram funded under this section may—

5 (A) establish mandatory postsecondary
6 planning classes for secondary school seniors to
7 assist the seniors in the college preparation and
8 application process;

9 (B) hire and train postsecondary coaches
10 with expertise in the college-going process;

11 (C) increase the number of counselors who
12 specialize in the college-going process serving
13 students;

14 (D) train student leaders to assist in the
15 creation of a college-going culture in their
16 schools;

17 (E) provide opportunities for students to
18 explore postsecondary opportunities outside of
19 the school setting, such as college fairs, career
20 fairs, college tours, workplace visits, or other
21 similar activities;

22 (F) assist students with test preparation,
23 college applications, Federal financial aid appli-
24 cations, and scholarship applications;

1 (G) establish partnerships with programs
2 funded under chapters 1 and 2 of subpart 2 of
3 part A of title IV of the Higher Education Act
4 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–11 et seq. and
5 1070a–21 et seq.)), and with community and
6 nonprofit organizations to increase college-going
7 rates at secondary schools served by the eligible
8 local educational agency;

9 (H) provide long-term postsecondary follow
10 up with graduates of the secondary schools
11 served by the eligible local educational agencies,
12 including increasing alumni involvement in
13 mentoring and advising roles within the sec-
14 ondary school;

15 (I) create and maintain a postsecondary
16 access center in the school setting that provides
17 information on colleges and universities, career
18 opportunities, and financial aid options and
19 provide a setting in which professionals working
20 in programs funded under chapters 1 and 2 of
21 subpart 2 of part A of title IV of the Higher
22 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a–11 et
23 seq. and 1070a–21 et seq.)), can meet with stu-
24 dents;

1 (J) deliver college and career planning cur-
 2 riculum as a stand-alone course, or embedded
 3 in other classes, for all students in secondary
 4 school; and

5 (K) increase parent involvement in pre-
 6 paring for postsecondary opportunities.

7 (h) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds made
 8 available under this section shall be used to supplement,
 9 and not supplant, other Federal, State, and local funds
 10 available to carry out the activities described in this sec-
 11 tion.

12 (i) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary, di-
 13 rectly or through contracting through a full and open
 14 process with 1 or more organizations that have dem-
 15 onstrated experience providing technical assistance to
 16 raise school-wide college enrollment rates in local edu-
 17 cational agencies in not less than 3 States, shall provide
 18 technical assistance to grantees in carrying out this sec-
 19 tion. The technical assistance shall—

20 (1) provide assistance in the calculation and
 21 analysis of college-going rates for all grant recipi-
 22 ents;

23 (2) provide semi-annual analysis to each grant
 24 recipient recommending best practices based on a

1 comparison of the recipient's data with that of sec-
2 ondary schools with similar demographics; and

3 (3) provide annual best practices conferences
4 for all grant recipients.

5 (j) EVALUATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

6 (1) MEASURE ENROLLMENT AND TRACK
7 DATA.—Each eligible local educational agency that
8 receives a grant under this section shall—

9 (A) measure externally verified school-wide
10 college enrollment; and

11 (B) track data that leads to increased col-
12 lege going, including college applications sent
13 and Free Application for Federal Student Aid
14 forms filed.

15 (2) EVALUATIONS BY GRANTEES.—Each eligi-
16 ble local educational agency that receives a grant
17 under this section shall—

18 (A) conduct periodic evaluations of the ef-
19 fectiveness of the activities carried out under
20 the grant toward increasing school-wide college-
21 going rates;

22 (B) use such evaluations to refine and im-
23 prove activities conducted with the grant and
24 the performance measures for such activities;
25 and

1 (C) make the results of such evaluations
2 publicly available, including by providing public
3 notice of such availability.

4 (3) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the
5 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
6 submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a
7 report concerning the results of—

8 (A) the evaluations conducted under para-
9 graph (2); and

10 (B) an evaluation conducted by the Sec-
11 retary to analyze the effectiveness and efficacy
12 of the activities conducted with grants under
13 this section.

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