

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1649

To authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to reduce the size of core curriculum classes in public elementary and secondary schools, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 19, 2009

Mr. MEEK of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to reduce the size of core curriculum classes in public elementary and secondary schools, 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 “High-Quality Edu-
5 cation Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) Tennessee’s wide-ranging and research-in-
2 tensive STAR project began in the mid-1980’s when
3 the Tennessee legislature funded an initial 4-year
4 study seeking to compare achievements for early
5 grade students who would be assigned randomly to
6 a standard-sized class, a standard-sized class with a
7 teacher aide, or a class with reduced size. Several
8 new analyses of the Tennessee STAR program show
9 that reducing class size has both immediate and
10 long-term benefits.

11 (2) Research shows that the benefits of partici-
12 pating in small classes increase from year to year,
13 both in the early grades when classes are small and
14 in subsequent years when students are placed in
15 larger classes.

16 (3) Further, follow-up studies of the same stu-
17 dents show that high-school students who were in
18 small classes in first through third grades beginning
19 in 1985 were less likely to be held back a year or
20 suspended compared with their peers from larger
21 classes.

22 (4) The students from small classes were found
23 to be making better grades in high school and taking
24 more advanced courses.

1 (5) The State of Wisconsin passed legislation in
2 1995 to phase in reduction of classes to 15 students
3 in low-wealth schools. A January 2003 study of that
4 program, called SAGE, revealed that average test
5 scores in smaller first grade classes increased 12 to
6 14 percent more than scores of students in regular
7 classes.

8 (6) Research further shows that at the end of
9 fifth grade, students who were in small classes in
10 first through third grades were about half a school
11 year (5 months) ahead of students from larger class-
12 es in all core subjects—reading, language arts,
13 math, and science.

14 (7) In 1999, the Department of Education re-
15 ported that studies have consistently identified a
16 positive relationship between reduced class size and
17 improved student performance. The National Assess-
18 ment on Educational Progress, the Economic Policy
19 Institute, RAND, the Educational Testing Service,
20 the American Institute of Research, and many other
21 respected organizations have reached similar conclu-
22 sions.

23 (8) In smaller classes, teachers spend more
24 time on instruction and less time on discipline prob-
25 lems, reporting that they know their students better,

1 know where each child is in the learning process,
2 and can provide more individualized instruction.

3 (9) Smaller classes lead to better identification
4 of students who need special help, increased student
5 participation and engagement, improved student be-
6 havior, and reduced retention of students in the
7 same grade.

8 (10) Outcomes associated with small classes are
9 the foundation of safe schools: improved student be-
10 havior and human relations skills, increased partici-
11 pation in schooling and school-sanctioned events, in-
12 creased sense of community in small classes, and
13 generally improved school climate where students,
14 teachers, and parents feel more comfortable.

15 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to assist
16 States to proactively attempt to lower class size in order
17 to provide students and teachers with an educational envi-
18 ronment more conducive to optimal student performance.

19 **SEC. 3. CLASS SIZE REDUCTION MATCHING GRANT PRO-**
20 **GRAM.**

21 (a) GRANTS.—The Secretary of Education may make
22 grants to eligible entities to reduce the size of core cur-
23 riculum classes in public elementary and secondary
24 schools.

1 (b) ELIGIBLE ENTITY DEFINED.—In this section,
2 the term “eligible entity” means any State, or any local
3 educational agency in a State that is not a grantee under
4 this section, that meets the following:

5 (1) The State or local educational agency has in
6 effect a class size reduction program that—

7 (A) applies to all public elementary and
8 secondary schools served by the State or local
9 educational agency, respectively; and

10 (B) may be targeted to specific school pop-
11 ulations based on need, socioeconomic factors,
12 or school-age population.

13 (2) The State or local educational agency has
14 funding in its annual budget specifically allocated
15 for the program described in paragraph (1).

16 (3) The average core curriculum class size at
17 schools served by the State or local educational
18 agency—

19 (A) in kindergarten through third grade, is
20 greater than 18 students;

21 (B) in fourth through eighth grade, is
22 greater than 22 students; or

23 (C) in ninth through twelfth grade, is
24 greater than 25 students.

1 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary may not make
2 a grant under this section unless the grantee agrees to
3 use the grant for the following:

4 (1) Constructing new classroom space.

5 (2) Hiring additional teachers.

6 (3) Purchasing portable structures to replace
7 administrative offices converted into classroom
8 space.

9 (d) RESTRICTIONS.—The Secretary may not make a
10 grant under this section unless the grantee agrees that
11 funds received under the grant will not be used for any
12 of the following:

13 (1) To pay any long-term financing obligations
14 such as bonding.

15 (2) To pay any administrative costs or fees.

16 (e) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this sec-
17 tion, the Secretary may give priority to eligible entities
18 that serve schools in which—

19 (1) more than 17 percent of the students older
20 than 4 and younger than 18 years of age are from
21 families with incomes below the poverty line; or

22 (2) the average core curriculum class size is
23 higher, particularly in the primary grades, than the
24 average core curriculum class size at schools served
25 by other grant applicants for the fiscal year.

1 (f) MATCHING FUNDS.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may not
3 make a grant under this section unless the grantee
4 agrees to make available (directly or through dona-
5 tions from public or private entities) non-Federal
6 contributions toward the costs of the activities under
7 the grant in an amount that is not less than \$2 for
8 each \$1 provided by the Secretary in the grant.

9 (2) DETERMINATION OF AMOUNT CONTRIB-
10 UTED.—Non-Federal contributions required in para-
11 graph (1) may be in cash or in kind, fairly evalu-
12 ated, including plant, equipment, or services.
13 Amounts provided by the Federal Government, or
14 services assisted or subsidized to any significant ex-
15 tent by the Federal Government, may not be in-
16 cluded in determining the amount of such non-Fed-
17 eral contributions.

18 (g) APPLICATION.—

19 (1) SUBMISSION.—To seek a grant under this
20 section, an eligible entity shall submit an application
21 to the Secretary in such form, in such manner, and
22 containing such information as the Secretary may
23 require.

24 (2) CONTENTS.—An application for a grant
25 under this section shall include the following:

1 (A) Certification of the average core cur-
2 riculum class size at schools served by the eligi-
3 ble entity for each of the grade ranges that—

4 (i) are described in subsection (b)(3);

5 and

6 (ii) will be served by the entity's class
7 size reduction program.

8 (B) Certification of the eligible entity's ac-
9 tual and expected expenditures for the entity's
10 class size reduction program for the fiscal year
11 involved.

12 (C) A description of the eligible entity's
13 class size reduction program and the program's
14 goals.

15 (D) A description of how the eligible entity
16 intends to use funds received under the grant.

17 (E) In the case of an eligible entity that
18 has already received a grant under this section,
19 the entity's progress in achieving the goals of
20 its class size reduction program, particularly
21 relative to high poverty areas.

22 (3) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall establish a
23 deadline for the submission of applications for a
24 grant under this section.

25 (h) OTHER DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 (1) The term “average core curriculum class
2 size” means the number that is—

3 (A) equal to the sum of the number of stu-
4 dents in each core curriculum class (including
5 for each school term and period of instruction)
6 divided by the total number of such classes; and

7 (B) is based on the ratio of physical class
8 rooms to students, irrespective of the ratio of
9 teachers to students.

10 (2) The term “core curriculum class” means a
11 class in any of the following subjects:

12 (A) Mathematics.

13 (B) Science.

14 (C) Reading, language arts, or English, in-
15 cluding English for speakers of other languages.

16 (D) Social studies, including history, civics,
17 political science, government, geography, and
18 economics.

19 (E) Foreign language.

20 (3) The terms “local educational agency” and
21 “poverty line” have the meanings given those terms
22 in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary
23 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

24 (4) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
25 of Education.

1 (5) The term “State” includes the several
2 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth
3 of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern
4 Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Vir-
5 gin Islands, any other territory or possession of the
6 United States, and any Indian tribe (as that term is
7 defined in section 4(e) of the Indian Self-Determina-
8 tion and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C.
9 450b(e)).

10 (i) FUNDING.—

11 (1) BIENNIAL PAYMENTS.—The Secretary shall
12 make payments to each grantee under this section
13 on a biennial basis.

14 (2) LIMITATION.—For any fiscal year, the Sec-
15 retary may not make a payment to any grantee
16 under this section in an amount that exceeds the
17 lesser of the following:

18 (A) An amount that is 20 percent of the
19 total amount appropriated to carry out this sec-
20 tion for the fiscal year.

21 (B) \$200,000,000.

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