II

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 322

To set the United States on track to ensure children are ready to learn when they begin kindergarten.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 13, 2013

Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BEGICH, and Ms. HIRONO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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A BILL

To set the United States on track to ensure children are ready to learn when they begin kindergarten.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Ready to Learn Act''.

SEC. 2. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“TITLE X—SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN

“SEC. 10001. SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN GRANTS.

“(a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From amounts available under section 10003, the Secretary is authorized to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible States to pay the Federal share of establishing and administering high-quality full day voluntary prekindergarten programs for children age 4 in the State, in order to promote school readiness for such children.

“(b) APPLICATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—If a State desires a grant under this title, the Governor of such State shall submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner, and containing a plan that outlines how and when such State expects to provide voluntary prekindergarten for every 4-year-old in the State.

“(2) SUBGRANTS TO ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (c)(2), a State that receives a grant under this title shall use the grant funds to award subgrants to eligible entities to carry out the requirements of this title.

"(B) SUBGRANTS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PROVIDERS.—In awarding subgrants under subparagraph (A), a State shall use not less than 25 percent of the grant funds provided to the State to award subgrants to eligible entities that are community-based providers of prekindergarten programs.

"(C) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—In this paragraph, the term 'eligible entity' includes schools, child care entities, Head Start programs, or other community-based providers of prekindergarten programs.

"(c) USE OF FUNDS.—A State that receives a grant under this title shall use—

"(1) not less than 85 percent of the funds provided under such grant to carry out the activities described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (d); and

"(2) not more than 15 percent of such funds at the State level for quality investment described in subsection (d)(3).

"(d) USE OF FUNDS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives a grant under this title shall use grant funds to provide a high-quality prekindergarten program that—

"(A) serves children age 4 in the State, serving first children from low-income families with incomes that are not more than 200 percent of the poverty line and those who are limited English proficient;

"(B) not later than 2 years after the receipt of the grant, ensures that each classroom is taught by a teacher who has—

"(i) a baccalaureate degree or advanced degree in early childhood education; or

"(ii) a baccalaureate degree and specialized training in early childhood development;

"(C) utilizes a developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate curriculum that is aligned with the State early learning standards and valid and reliable multiple assessments for the purpose of improving instruction; and

"(D) has a teacher-child ratio of not more than 1 to 10 and a group size of not more than 20.

"(2) ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS.—After a State has fulfilled the requirements described in paragraph (1), such State may use grant funds—

''(A) to serve younger children;

''(B) to increase salaries;

''(C) for additional comprehensive services as may be needed; and

''(D) for the construction of new facilities, or the renovation, repair, or alteration of existing facilities, necessary to commence or continue such prekindergarten.

''(3) QUALITY INVESTMENT.—A State that receives a grant under this title shall use grant funds—

''(A) to develop or expand a quality rating and improvement system in the State;

''(B) to carry out other activities needed to ensure the health and safety of children served under this title;

''(C) for professional development for teachers and staff of the prekindergarten program described in paragraph (1); or

''(D) to provide comprehensive services.

''SEC. 10002. ADMINISTRATION.

''(a) FEDERAL SHARE; NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—

''(1) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of a grant under this title shall be 50 percent of the costs of carrying out the activities described in section 10001(d).

"(2) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-Federal share of a grant under this title shall be provided in cash.

"(b) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—The Secretary may not award a grant under this title to any State unless the Secretary first determines that the per-child expenditure by the State and its political subdivisions for prekindergarten programs (other than funds used to pay the non-Federal share under this section) for the fiscal year for which the determination is made is equal to or greater than such expenditure for the preceding fiscal year.

"(c) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Grant funds received under this title shall be used to supplement and not supplant other Federal, State, and local public funds expended to promote voluntary prekindergarten programs in the State.

"(d) WAIVER OR REDUCTION.—The Secretary may waive or reduce the non-Federal share requirement under subsection (a) or the maintenance of effort requirement under subsection (b) if the State demonstrates a need for such waiver or reduction due to financial hardship.

"(e) PROVISION OF GRANT FUNDS.—In awarding a grant under this title to a State, the Secretary shall provide the grant funds to the Governor of the State, to enable the Governor to designate, in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care established under section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)), a lead agency to best direct the funds in a manner that improves the State's programs by carrying out the requirements of this title.

"(f) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this title, the Secretary shall coordinate, not less often than quarterly, with the Secretary of Health and Human Services regarding the review of State plans as described in section 10001(b) and the implementation of the prekindergarten programs under this title.

"(g) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

"(1) STATE REPORTS.—Each State that receives a grant under this title shall submit to the Secretary an annual report detailing the effectiveness of each prekindergarten program in that State funded under this title.

"(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives an annual report that describes each State program of assistance for prekindergarten programs funded under this title.

"(3) CONTENTS OF REPORTS.—A report submitted under paragraph (1) or (2) shall include—

"(A) a description of each action taken to move toward providing a high-quality prekindergarten education to all 4-year-olds;

"(B) a summary of each measure that will be taken to achieve the goal of providing full day high-quality prekindergarten to all 4-year-olds, including a timetable according to which such measures will be implemented;

"(C) a description of all efforts to improve the integration of full day high-quality prekindergarten programs with the kindergarten through grade 12 education system; and

"(D) a description of all efforts to educate parents about best practices for the role of parents in the early education of a child.

"SEC. 10003. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

"There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2014 through 2019.".

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