

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1128

To establish an Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Program.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 29, 2015

Ms. STABENOW introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To establish an Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Program.

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 “Early Pell Promise
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. EARLY FEDERAL PELL GRANT COMMITMENT PRO-**
7 **GRAM.**

8 Subpart 1 of part A of title IV of the Higher Edu-
9 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a et seq.) is amended
10 by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 401B. EARLY FEDERAL PELL GRANT COMMITMENT**
 2 **PROGRAM.**

3 “(a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary is au-
 4 thorized to carry out an Early Federal Pell Grant Com-
 5 mitment Program (referred to in this section as the ‘Pro-
 6 gram’) under which the Secretary shall—

7 “(1) award grants to State educational agencies
 8 to pay the administrative expenses incurred in par-
 9 ticipating in the Program; and

10 “(2) make a commitment to award Federal Pell
 11 Grants to eligible students in accordance with this
 12 section.

13 “(b) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—The Program shall
 14 meet the following requirements:

15 “(1) ELIGIBLE STUDENTS.—

16 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A student shall be eli-
 17 gible to receive a commitment from the Sec-
 18 retary to receive a Federal Pell Grant early in
 19 the student’s academic career if the student—

20 “(i) is in 8th grade; and

21 “(ii) is eligible for a free or reduced
 22 price lunch under the Richard B. Russell
 23 National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
 24 1751 et seq.).

25 “(2) FEDERAL PELL GRANT COMMITMENT.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
2 subparagraph (B), each eligible student who
3 participates in the Program shall receive a com-
4 mitment from the Secretary to receive a Fed-
5 eral Pell Grant during the first 2 academic
6 years that the student is in attendance at an in-
7 stitution of higher education as an under-
8 graduate student, if the student—

9 “(i) applies for Federal financial aid
10 (via the FAFSA) during the student’s sen-
11 ior year of secondary school and during the
12 succeeding academic year; and

13 “(ii) enrolls at such institution of
14 higher education—

15 “(I) not later than 3 years after
16 such student receives a secondary
17 school diploma or its recognized equiv-
18 alent; or

19 “(II) if such student becomes a
20 member of the Armed Forces, not
21 later than 3 years after such student
22 is discharged, separated, or released
23 from the Armed Forces.

24 “(B) EXCEPTION TO COMMITMENT.—If an
25 eligible student receives a commitment from the

1 Secretary to receive a Federal Pell Grant dur-
2 ing the first 2 academic years that the student
3 is in attendance at an institution of higher edu-
4 cation as an undergraduate student and the
5 student applies for Federal financial aid (via
6 the FAFSA) during the student's senior year of
7 secondary school or during the succeeding aca-
8 demic year, and the expected family contribu-
9 tion of the student for either of such years is
10 more than 2 times the threshold amount for
11 Federal Pell Grant eligibility for such year,
12 then such student shall not receive a Federal
13 Pell Grant under this section for the succeeding
14 academic year. Such student shall continue to
15 be eligible for any other Federal student finan-
16 cial aid for which the student is otherwise eligi-
17 ble.

18 “(3) APPLICABILITY OF FEDERAL PELL GRANT
19 REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements of section 401
20 shall apply to Federal Pell Grants awarded pursuant
21 to this section, except that with respect to each eligi-
22 ble student who participates in the Program and is
23 not subject the exception under paragraph (2)(B),
24 the amount of each such eligible student's Federal
25 Pell Grant only shall be calculated by deeming such

1 student to have an expected family contribution
 2 equal to zero.

3 “(c) STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY APPLICA-
 4 TIONS.—

5 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each State educational
 6 agency desiring to participate in the Program shall
 7 submit an application to the Secretary at such time
 8 and in such manner as the Secretary may require.

9 “(2) CONTENTS.—Each application shall in-
 10 clude—

11 “(A) a description of the proposed targeted
 12 information campaign for the Program and a
 13 copy of the plan described in subsection (e)(2);

14 “(B) an assurance that the State edu-
 15 cational agency will fully cooperate with the on-
 16 going evaluation of the Program; and

17 “(C) such other information as the Sec-
 18 retary may require.

19 “(d) EVALUATION.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts appro-
 21 priated under subsection (f) for a fiscal year, the
 22 Secretary shall reserve not more than \$1,000,000 to
 23 award a grant or contract to an organization outside
 24 the Department for an independent evaluation of the
 25 impact of the Program.

1 “(2) COMPETITIVE BASIS.—The grant or con-
2 tract shall be awarded on a competitive basis.

3 “(3) MATTERS EVALUATED.—The evaluation
4 described in this subsection shall consider metrics
5 established by the Secretary that emphasize college
6 access and success, encouraging low-income students
7 to pursue higher education, and the cost effective-
8 ness of the program.

9 “(4) DISSEMINATION.—The findings of the
10 evaluation shall be widely disseminated to the public
11 by the organization conducting the evaluation as well
12 as by the Secretary.

13 “(e) TARGETED INFORMATION CAMPAIGN.—

14 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each State educational
15 agency receiving a grant under this section shall, in
16 cooperation with the participating local educational
17 agencies within the State and the Secretary, develop
18 a targeted information campaign for the Program.

19 “(2) PLAN.—Each State educational agency re-
20 ceiving a grant under this section shall include in
21 the application submitted under subsection (c) a
22 written plan for their proposed targeted information
23 campaign. The plan shall include the following:

1 “(A) OUTREACH.—Outreach to students
2 and their families, at a minimum, at the begin-
3 ning and end of each academic year.

4 “(B) DISTRIBUTION.—How the State edu-
5 cational agency plans to provide the outreach
6 described in subparagraph (A) and to provide
7 the information described in subparagraph (C).

8 “(C) INFORMATION.—The annual provi-
9 sion by the State educational agency to all stu-
10 dents and families participating in the Program
11 of information regarding—

12 “(i) the estimated statewide average
13 higher education institution cost data for
14 each academic year, which cost data shall
15 be disaggregated by—

16 “(I) type of institution, includ-
17 ing—

18 “(aa) 2-year public colleges;

19 “(bb) 4-year public colleges;

20 “(cc) 4-year private colleges;

21 and

22 “(dd) private, for-profit col-
23 leges; and

24 “(II) component, including—

25 “(aa) tuition and fees; and

- 1 “(bb) room and board;
- 2 “(ii) Federal Pell Grants, including—
- 3 “(I) the maximum Federal Pell
- 4 Grant for each academic year;
- 5 “(II) when and how to apply for
- 6 a Federal Pell Grant; and
- 7 “(III) what the application proc-
- 8 ess for a Federal Pell Grant requires;
- 9 “(iii) State-specific college savings
- 10 programs;
- 11 “(iv) State-based financial aid, includ-
- 12 ing State-based merit aid; and
- 13 “(v) Federal financial aid available to
- 14 students, including eligibility criteria for
- 15 the Federal financial aid and an expla-
- 16 nation of the Federal financial aid pro-
- 17 grams.

18 “(3) ANNUAL INFORMATION.—The information

19 described in paragraph (2)(C) shall be provided to

20 eligible students annually for the duration of the

21 students’ participation in the Program.

22 “(4) RESERVATION.—Each State educational

23 agency receiving a grant under this section shall re-

24 serve \$200,000 of the grant funds received each fis-

1 cal year to carry out the targeted information cam-
2 paign described in this subsection.

3 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 such sums as may be necessary.”.

