

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2766

To support and expand civic engagement and political leadership of adolescent girls around the world, and other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 31, 2019

Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. CARDIN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To support and expand civic engagement and political leadership of adolescent girls around the world, and 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 “Girls’ Leadership, En-
5 gagement, Agency, and Development Act of 2019” or the
6 “Girls LEAD Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress makes the following findings:

9 (1) Inclusive democracy and governance are
10 fundamental objectives and critical foundations for

1 sustainable development and global peace. Pro-
2 motion of democracy, human rights, and governance
3 is a reflection of fundamental American values and
4 identity.

5 (2) Democracies score consistently higher than
6 nondemocracies on a broad range of socioeconomic
7 development indicators, including infant and child
8 mortality, life expectancy, primary school enrollment,
9 adult literacy, female youth literacy, female sec-
10 ondary school enrollment, and access to clean water.

11 (3) Women's political participation results in
12 tangible gains for democracy, including greater re-
13 sponsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation
14 across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable
15 peace.

16 (4) Women in leadership positions are more
17 likely to resolve national crises without resorting to
18 violence, sustain peace agreements over longer peri-
19 ods of time, advocate for social issues that benefit
20 all, and allocate budgets to health and education.

21 (5) Despite comprising over 50 percent of the
22 world's population, women are underrepresented at
23 all levels of public sector decision making. At the
24 current rate of progress, it will take over 100 years
25 to achieve gender parity in political participation.

1 (6) Engaging adolescent girls more in civil and
 2 political activities contributes to increased political
 3 participation and women’s leadership around the
 4 world over time. Adolescents who participate actively
 5 in their community from early on are more likely to
 6 become engaged citizens and voters, with higher lev-
 7 els of ambition for future leadership positions in
 8 both politics and the private sector. Their safe,
 9 meaningful, and appropriate participation is key to
 10 creating democratic societies with informed and en-
 11 gaged citizens.

12 (7) Adolescence is a critical period in a girl’s
 13 life, when significant physical, emotional, and social
 14 changes shape her future. Adolescent girls are par-
 15 ticularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, child, early, and
 16 forced marriage, and other forms of gender-based vi-
 17 olence, including sexual exploitation, harassment,
 18 and assault, which are detrimental to their futures.

19 (8) Approximately 132,000,000 adolescent girls
 20 between the ages of 6–17 are out of school. United
 21 Nations data revealed an increase of over six percent
 22 in the number of adolescent girls not in primary
 23 school, in just one year, from 32,000,000 in 2015 to
 24 34,000,000 in 2016.

1 (9) By 2030, over 150,000,000 more adolescent
2 girls will marry as children. Despite global progress,
3 12,000,000 adolescent girls under 18 will marry an-
4 nually. The number one cause of death for adoles-
5 cent girls 15–19 years old is childbirth, and 90 per-
6 cent of births to adolescent girls 15–19 occur within
7 a marriage.

8 (10) Every 10 minutes, somewhere in the
9 world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence.
10 A girl’s risk of dying as a result of violence increases
11 from early to late adolescence. Violence is the second
12 leading cause of death among adolescent girls glob-
13 ally.

14 (11) Empowering adolescent girls and young
15 women in childhood and as they transition to become
16 adults, investing in their leadership potential, and
17 ensuring there are established pathways to positions
18 of political leadership and civic engagement con-
19 tribute to ensuring a world where women can thrive
20 as political leaders and decisionmakers, in economic
21 spaces and across society as a whole.

22 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

23 It shall be the international development policy of the
24 United States to—

1 (1) promote and ensure that all adolescents
2 from the most marginalized populations, including
3 both girls and boys, are able to fully participate in
4 society, and are specifically able to exercise their
5 civil and political rights as agents of change in their
6 communities and countries;

7 (2) increase the capability of adolescents, par-
8 ticularly adolescent girls, in assuming leadership
9 roles, holding decisionmakers to account, and influ-
10 encing decision making at the household, commu-
11 nity, and societal levels;

12 (3) ensure meaningful engagement and con-
13 sultation with adolescents, particularly adolescent
14 girls, to ensure that United States foreign assistance
15 initiatives, including the planning, implementation,
16 and evaluation of projects, are effective and respon-
17 sive to this input with a focus on country and com-
18 munity ownership;

19 (4) ensure that consultation processes are
20 transparent, voluntary, inclusive, safe, respectful,
21 and responsive to structural barriers affecting ado-
22 lescent girls' meaningful engagement;

23 (5) actively work to decrease discrimination to-
24 wards, and the abuses of, the rights of adolescent

1 girls, particularly among the most vulnerable popu-
 2 lations; and

3 (6) utilize evidence-based approaches and prac-
 4 tices in developing such programs, including taking
 5 into account the role of family, religious, and com-
 6 munity leaders in creating supportive environments;
 7 the identification of mentors and role models; and
 8 the creation of safe spaces for adolescent girls.

9 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY TO ENCOURAGE THE CIVIC AND POLIT-**
 10 **ICAL PARTICIPATION OF ADOLESCENT**
 11 **GIRLS.**

12 (a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than one year
 13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
 14 of State and the Administrator of the United States Agen-
 15 cy for International Development shall jointly submit to
 16 the appropriate congressional committees and make pub-
 17 licly available a single strategy on strengthening the par-
 18 ticipation of adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, in
 19 democracy, human rights, and governance. The strategy
 20 shall include a detailed description of how each agency's
 21 democracy and governance center intends to fulfill the pol-
 22 icy objectives set forth in section 3.

23 (b) ELEMENTS.—The strategy submitted under sub-
 24 section (a) shall include the following elements:

1 (1) A specific implementation plan from each of
2 the relevant Federal agencies that describes—

3 (A) the anticipated contributions of the
4 agency, including technical, financial, and in-
5 kind contributions, to implement the strategy;
6 and

7 (B) the efforts of the agency to ensure
8 that the policies and initiatives carried out pur-
9 suant to the strategy are designed to achieve
10 maximum impact and long-term sustainability.

11 (2) Strategic objectives and activities, including
12 social accountability, research, and learning, to ad-
13 vance the leadership, civic, and political engagement
14 of adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, includ-
15 ing a description of how such efforts will advance
16 gender equality and reduce the distinct barriers that
17 adolescent girls and boys each face, including the
18 most marginalized adolescents, to their civic partici-
19 pation in existing structures, institutions, and the
20 broader enabling environment.

21 (3) Metrics, benchmarks, and a monitoring,
22 evaluation, and learning plan to ensure the account-
23 ability and effectiveness of all activities related to
24 the policy objectives set forth in section 3.

1 (4) An explanation of how such objectives and
 2 activities will be aligned with existing United States
 3 foreign assistance policies and strategies relevant to
 4 promoting global gender equality and women’s and
 5 girls’ empowerment.

6 (5) An explanation of how gender analysis has
 7 informed the strategy and implementation plan, in-
 8 cluding the strategic objectives and activities to ad-
 9 vance the leadership, civic, and political engagement
 10 of adolescents.

11 (6) Plans for consultations with civil society
 12 that include girl-led and women’s organizations and
 13 other local civil society in partner countries, United
 14 States civil society, and other stakeholders to inform
 15 the development and implementation of the strategy,
 16 the creation of metrics, and the monitoring and eval-
 17 uation of program interventions.

18 (c) CONSULTATION.—The strategy required under
 19 subsection (a) shall be developed in consultation with civil
 20 society in the United States and affected foreign countries,
 21 including adolescent girls.

22 **SEC. 5. IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE**
 23 **PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES.**

24 The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the
 25 United States Agency for International Development shall

1 implement United States foreign assistance projects, pro-
 2 grams, and activities designed to strengthen the participa-
 3 tion of adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, in democ-
 4 racy, human rights, and governance, including—

5 (1) increasing adolescent girls’ civic and polit-
 6 ical knowledge, advocacy, leadership and research
 7 skills, leadership opportunities, intergenerational
 8 mentorship opportunities, data and media literacy,
 9 and supporting their meaningful political participa-
 10 tion and engagement in civil society and the public
 11 sphere;

12 (2) addressing barriers to adolescent girls’ and
 13 women’s civic engagement and political participation,
 14 and integrating engagement of men and boys, fami-
 15 lies, community leaders, religious leaders, schools,
 16 political bodies, government bodies, and other stake-
 17 holders to improve the enabling environment for ad-
 18 olescent girls’ civic and political participation;

19 (3) identifying and taking into account other
 20 barriers to adolescent girls’ civic and political en-
 21 gagement, including child marriage, access to quality
 22 primary and secondary education, unequal childcare
 23 burdens, gender-based violence, early pregnancy, ad-
 24 olescent maternal mortality, mobility constraints,
 25 malnourishment, displacement, lack of safe and reli-

1 able female sanitation and hygiene facilities, and
2 harmful social norms;

3 (4) integrating feedback from program partici-
4 pants into the monitoring, evaluation, and learning
5 processes of relevant United States agencies;

6 (5) supporting girl-led and girl-focused civil so-
7 ciety organizations with flexible, sustainable funding
8 and technical support; and

9 (6) ensuring age-appropriate and gender-sen-
10 sitive child-safeguarding provisions for all programs
11 that engage participants under the age of 18.

12 **SEC. 6. PRIORITIZATION OF SPENDING.**

13 The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the
14 United States Agency for International Development shall
15 prioritize foreign assistance funding made available for de-
16 mocracy, human rights, and governance programs in ac-
17 cordance with this Act.

18 **SEC. 7. ANNUAL REPORT.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
20 date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter,
21 the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the
22 United States Agency for International Development shall
23 jointly submit to the appropriate congressional committees
24 a report on progress made by relevant United States Gov-
25 ernment agencies towards increasing civic and political

1 participation of adolescent girls and boys around the
2 world.

3 (b) ELEMENTS.—The report required under sub-
4 section (a) shall include the following elements:

5 (1) An estimate of the number of people
6 reached by United States Government-funded for-
7 eign assistance or development intervention disag-
8 gregated by age and sex.

9 (2) A description of how adolescent girls, par-
10 ticularly among the most vulnerable populations, are
11 integrated into existing democracy, human rights,
12 governance, and rule of law programming.

13 (3) The percentage of program participants
14 that are adolescent girls in current democracy,
15 human rights, and governance programs focused on
16 issues, including civic engagement, political partici-
17 pation, advocacy, research, and leadership develop-
18 ment, the percentage of funds spent on those pro-
19 grams that focus on adolescent girls, and the coun-
20 tries in which those programs take place.

21 (4) The number of democracy, human rights,
22 and governance programs created to improve or that
23 otherwise support civic engagement, political partici-
24 pation, and leadership of adolescent girls, the

1 amount of funds spent on those programs, and the
2 countries in which those programs take place.

3 (c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The report required
4 under subsection (a) shall be posted and made available
5 on a text-based, searchable, and publicly available internet
6 website.

7 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

8 In this Act—

9 (1) the term “appropriate congressional com-
10 mittees” means—

11 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations
12 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
13 Senate; and

14 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and
15 the Committee on Appropriations of the House
16 of Representatives;

17 (2) the term “foreign assistance” has the mean-
18 ing given the term in section 634(b) of the Foreign
19 Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2394(b)); and

20 (3) the term “gender analysis” has the meaning
21 given the term in section 3(a) of the Women’s En-
22 trepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of
23 2018 (Public Law 115–428).

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