

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5531

To establish a grant program to fund career and technical education programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

Mr. SMITH of Washington introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To establish a grant program to fund career and technical education programs, 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 “Career and Technical
5 Education Access Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The demand for skilled workers in indus-
9 tries such as manufacturing, healthcare, construc-
10 tion, and information technology is increasing.

1 (2) Connecticut’s Technical Education and Ca-
2 reer System has demonstrated that a statewide ca-
3 reer and technical education (in this Act referred to
4 as “CTE”) model can successfully prepare students
5 for both postsecondary education and high-demand
6 careers.

7 (3) Expanding CTE high schools nationwide
8 will create greater economic opportunities for stu-
9 dents, particularly those in under-resourced commu-
10 nities.

11 (4) Students in States without dedicated CTE
12 high schools often lack access to hands-on, work-
13 based learning opportunities.

14 (5) Students in rural or underserved areas may
15 lack access to in-person CTE programs, necessi-
16 tating the development of online and hybrid learning
17 options to expand educational opportunities.

18 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

19 (1) create a voluntary Federal grant program
20 to allow States to establish, expand, or improve CTE
21 programs tailored to their local workforce needs;

22 (2) provide flexibility for States to implement
23 CTE programs through standalone CTE high
24 schools, regional career centers, or hybrid models;

1 (3) ensure strong industry partnerships and
2 work-based learning opportunities in all CTE pro-
3 grams established or supported by a grant under
4 this Act;

5 (4) mandate States that receive a grant under
6 this Act to conduct a workforce alignment assess-
7 ment every 3 years to assess labor market needs and
8 ensure alignment of CTE programs with in-demand
9 jobs;

10 (5) incentivize employer participation by en-
11 couraging funding contributions, equipment dona-
12 tions, paid internships or apprenticeships, and hiring
13 preferences for CTE graduates;

14 (6) integrate dual-enrollment programs with
15 junior or community colleges to ensure students can
16 earn college credit while completing high school CTE
17 programs;

18 (7) require that students completing CTE pro-
19 grams receive automatic credit transfer options for
20 institutions of higher education, ensuring their
21 coursework is recognized at participating institu-
22 tions;

23 (8) permit States to use grant funds to develop
24 and implement online and hybrid CTE programs, ex-

1 panding access to students in remote or underserved
2 areas; and

3 (9) establish a CTE Pell Grant for public sec-
4 ondary school students, expanding access to finan-
5 cial aid for industry-recognized certifications and
6 training.

7 **SEC. 3. GRANT PROGRAM FOR ESTABLISHING OR SUP-**
8 **PORTING CTE PROGRAMS.**

9 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 1 year after
10 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Edu-
11 cation, in coordination with the Secretary of Labor, shall
12 establish a grant program under which the Secretary of
13 Education shall provide grants, on a competitive basis, to
14 State educational agencies for approved activities under
15 subsection (e).

16 (b) **APPLICATION.**—To be eligible to receive a grant
17 under this section, a State educational agency shall submit
18 an application to the Secretary at such time, in such man-
19 ner, and containing such information as the Secretary may
20 reasonably require, including the CTE program implemen-
21 tation plan described in subsection (c).

22 (c) **CTE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.**—As
23 part of the application required under subsection (b), a
24 State educational agency shall develop and submit a 5-

1 year plan for establishing and expanding CTE programs
2 that includes—

3 (1) a needs assessment demonstrating demand
4 for CTE programs based on stakeholder input, in-
5 cluding input from students, parents, local employ-
6 ers, and community partners;

7 (2) an assessment of the CTE programs offered
8 by the State educational agency at the time the ap-
9 plication is submitted, including whether the State
10 educational agency—

11 (A) operates a statewide CTE high school
12 system; or

13 (B) offers any regional or limited CTE
14 programs;

15 (3) a budget and timeline for establishing or ex-
16 panding CTE programs;

17 (4) a strategy for workforce alignment, includ-
18 ing employer partnerships and job placement path-
19 ways;

20 (5) a plan for ensuring equity and access re-
21 garding CTE programs, including outreach to un-
22 derserved populations and opportunity youth;

23 (6) a program alignment report demonstrating
24 alignment of CTE program offerings with in-demand
25 job sectors; and

1 (7) a plan for the development of online and hy-
2 brid CTE programs where applicable.

3 (d) GRANT DURATION.—Except as provided in sub-
4 section (j)(3), a grant under this section shall be awarded
5 for a period of 5 years.

6 (e) APPROVED ACTIVITIES.—A State educational
7 agency that receives a grant under this section shall use
8 such grant to carry out 1 or more of the following activi-
9 ties:

10 (1) Constructing or renovating CTE high
11 schools or regional career centers.

12 (2) Creating or updating career-aligned
13 coursework.

14 (3) Supporting or facilitating collaboration by
15 CTE high schools, regional career centers, or local
16 educational agencies with local businesses, trade
17 unions, and junior or community colleges to align
18 CTE programs with workforce needs.

19 (4) Developing internship, apprenticeship, and
20 cooperative education opportunities for students en-
21 rolled in CTE programs.

22 (5) Collaborating with CTE high schools, re-
23 gional career centers, or local educational agencies
24 to expand career counseling, financial assistance,

1 and wraparound services for students enrolled in
2 CTE programs.

3 (6) Purchasing state-of-the-art tools and soft-
4 ware for hands-on training for students enrolled in
5 CTE programs, distributing such tools and software
6 to CTE high schools, regional career centers, or
7 local educational agencies, and training educators on
8 how to use such tools and software.

9 (7) Funding professional development for edu-
10 cators in secondary-level CTE programs, including
11 instructors, counselors, and program coordinators
12 employed by CTE high schools, regional career cen-
13 ters, or local educational agencies.

14 (8) Expanding access to junior or community
15 college courses for CTE high school students to en-
16 sure seamless credit transfer.

17 (9) Supporting State educational agencies in
18 creating virtual or hybrid CTE programs to provide
19 access to students in rural or underserved regions.

20 (10) Supporting programs that provide multi-
21 craft construction instruction.

22 (11) Outreach to encourage and support the
23 participation of opportunity youth in CTE programs.

1 (f) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY; LABOR MARKET.—The
2 Secretary shall award grants under this section in a man-
3 ner that, to the extent practicable—

4 (1) ensures geographic diversity in the areas in
5 which activities will be carried out under the grants;
6 and

7 (2) aligns with the needs of the labor market in
8 the areas in which activities will be carried out
9 under the grants.

10 (g) COST SHARING.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall deter-
12 mine the Federal share of the cost of a project fund-
13 ed by a grant under this section based on the factors
14 described in paragraph (2) and subject to the re-
15 quirements of paragraph (3).

16 (2) FACTORS.—In determining the Federal
17 share of the cost of a project funded by a grant
18 under this section, the Secretary shall consider the
19 following factors:

20 (A) The scope and category of activities in-
21 cluded in the project, including whether the
22 project will—

23 (i) establish a CTE program;

24 (ii) expand an existing CTE program;

25 or

1 (iii) support an existing CTE pro-
2 gram.

3 (B) The status of any CTE programs that
4 the State educational agency that receives the
5 grant operates or otherwise oversees, including
6 whether such CTE programs are aligned with
7 workforce needs.

8 (C) The availability of non-Federal funds
9 to cover the non-Federal share of the cost of
10 the project.

11 (3) RANGE OF FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal
12 share of the cost of a project funded by a grant
13 under this section, as determined by the Secretary in
14 accordance with paragraph (2), shall not exceed 75
15 percent and shall not be less than 50 percent.

16 (4) IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS.—The non-Fed-
17 eral share of the cost of a project funded by a grant
18 under this section may be provided in the form of
19 an in-kind contribution of services, materials, or ac-
20 cess to land.

21 (h) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
23 receiving a grant under this section, and annually
24 thereafter, each recipient of such a grant shall sub-

1 mit to the Secretary a report that includes the fol-
2 lowing:

3 (A) The number of students enrolled in
4 CTE programs funded by a grant under this
5 section.

6 (B) To the extent practicable, the high
7 school graduation rates, college enrollment
8 rates, and job placement rates of students who
9 participated in CTE programs funded by a
10 grant under this section.

11 (C) The number of students who received
12 educational credentials, including industry-rec-
13 ognized certificates, through a CTE program
14 funded by a grant under this section.

15 (D) The number of employers who partici-
16 pate in, or other otherwise contribute to, CTE
17 programs funded by a grant under this section.

18 (2) DATABASE.—The Secretary shall publish on
19 a public website of the Department a database con-
20 taining the information reported to the Secretary
21 under paragraph (1).

22 (i) PERFORMANCE-BASED INCENTIVES.—The Sec-
23 retary may award additional grant funds to a State edu-
24 cational agency that demonstrates through the annual re-
25 port required under subsection (h)(1) that the CTE pro-

1 grams of the State educational agency that are funded by
2 a grant under this section are successful at assisting stu-
3 dents with acquiring jobs and educational credentials, in-
4 cluding industry-recognized certificates.

5 (j) BENCHMARKS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
7 performance benchmarks for State educational agen-
8 cies that receive a grant under this section, which
9 may include metrics related to—

10 (A) student enrollment in CTE programs;

11 (B) credential attainment;

12 (C) high school graduation rates;

13 (D) job placement; and

14 (E) employer engagement in CTE pro-
15 grams.

16 (2) CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN.—A State edu-
17 cational agency that receives a grant under this sec-
18 tion and fails to meet 1 or more of the benchmarks
19 established pursuant to paragraph (1) for 2 consecu-
20 tive fiscal years shall submit a corrective action plan
21 to the Secretary and the Secretary shall review such
22 plan for approval. A corrective action plan shall in-
23 clude the following:

24 (A) A needs assessment that—

1 (i) identifies the benchmarks estab-
2 lished pursuant to paragraph (1) that were
3 not met and examines the extent of under-
4 performance;

5 (ii) identifies and analyses the causes
6 of underperformance, including any gaps
7 in CTE program access, equity, quality, or
8 workforce alignment;

9 (iii) reviews stakeholder feedback, in-
10 cluding input from students, educators,
11 employers, and community partners; and

12 (iv) evaluates current CTE program
13 capacity, staffing, partnerships, and re-
14 source availability that may affect CTE
15 program outcomes.

16 (B) An improvement strategy that—

17 (i) outlines evidence-based actions the
18 State educational agency will take to ad-
19 dress the issues identified in the needs as-
20 sessment, including outlining any planned
21 changes to CTE program design, imple-
22 mentation, partnerships, staffing, cur-
23 riculum, instruction, or student supports;

24 (ii) describes how the actions outlined
25 pursuant to clause (i) will address gaps in

1 CTE program access, equity, quality, or
2 workforce alignment; and

3 (iii) establishes measurable short-term
4 and long-term goals to track CTE program
5 improvement.

6 (C) A timeline that—

7 (i) establishes a schedule for imple-
8 menting each component of the improve-
9 ment strategy;

10 (ii) establishes milestones, deadlines,
11 and responsible parties for each action out-
12 lined under subparagraph (B)(i), as appli-
13 cable; and

14 (iii) aligns with the reporting cycle of
15 the State educational agency and expected
16 period for achieving measurable improve-
17 ment.

18 (D) An evaluation plan that—

19 (i) identifies and describes the metrics
20 and data sources the State educational
21 agency will use to assess progress toward
22 meeting the goals established pursuant to
23 subparagraph (B)(iii), including the fre-
24 quency of data collection and analysis;

1 (ii) outlines how progress will be re-
2 ported to the Secretary and stakeholders;
3 and

4 (iii) establishes a process for adjusting
5 the improvement strategy based on data
6 collected and analyzed pursuant to clause
7 (i).

8 (3) GRANT REDUCTION AND RESTORATION.—

9 (A) REDUCTION.—In the case that a State
10 educational agency that receives a grant under
11 this section is required to submit a corrective
12 action plan under paragraph (2) and fails to
13 submit such plan, has such plan rejected by the
14 Secretary, or continues to fail to meet 1 or
15 more of the benchmarks established pursuant to
16 paragraph (1) after executing such plan, the
17 Secretary may reduce a grant under this section
18 to such State educational agency in whole or in
19 part, with written justification provided to the
20 State educational agency.

21 (B) RESTORATION.—In the case that a
22 State educational agency has a grant reduced
23 pursuant to subparagraph (A), a State edu-
24 cational agency may request that the Secretary
25 restores the grant to the original amount by

1 submitting an application to the Secretary con-
2 taining such information as the Secretary may
3 reasonably require, including documentation
4 demonstrating sustained improvement toward
5 meeting the benchmarks established pursuant
6 to paragraph (1).

7 (k) WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT.—Not later
8 than 1 year after receiving a grant under this section, and
9 every 3 years thereafter, each State educational agency
10 that receives a grant under this section shall conduct a
11 workforce needs assessment, submit such assessment to
12 the Secretary, and publish such assessment on a publicly
13 accessible website of the State educational agency. A work-
14 force needs assessment shall include the following informa-
15 tion:

16 (1) The labor market needs of the State such
17 State educational agency serves, including high-de-
18 mand job sectors, occupations with workforce short-
19 ages, and gaps in required credentials or skills as
20 identified by a workforce development board or simi-
21 lar State authority.

22 (2) An analysis of whether the CTE programs
23 of the State align with the labor market needs of the
24 State.

1 (3) Stakeholder input on the CTE programs of
2 the State from relevant employers, workforce boards
3 (or similar State authorities), educators, and stu-
4 dents.

5 (4) An analysis of whether the CTE programs
6 of the State provide equitable access to students.

7 (5) An analysis of geographic variation in the
8 labor market needs of the State.

9 (6) Recommendations for adjusting the CTE
10 programs of the State.

11 **SEC. 4. CTE PELL GRANTS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
13 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Education
14 shall award grants (to be known as “CTE Pell Grants”)
15 to public secondary school students for assistance with tui-
16 tion or other costs of attendance related to enrollment
17 in—

18 (1) a CTE program;

19 (2) a credentialing program;

20 (3) an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship pro-
21 gram;

22 (4) a dual-enrollment program with a junior or
23 community college that includes instruction in tech-
24 nical coursework;

1 (5) an occupation training program that is in-
2 cluded on a list of training programs maintained by
3 a State that identifies programs aligned with in-de-
4 mand industries or occupations in the State;

5 (6) a program consisting of multi-craft con-
6 struction instruction; or

7 (7) any other educational program as deter-
8 mined appropriate by the Secretary.

9 (b) APPLICATION.—

10 (1) REQUIRED MATERIALS.—To be eligible to
11 receive a grant under this section, a public sec-
12 ondary school student shall submit an application to
13 the Secretary (or to a participating State edu-
14 cational agency or local educational agency in ac-
15 cordance with paragraph (2)) at such time, in such
16 manner, and containing such information as the Sec-
17 retary may reasonably require, including documenta-
18 tion verifying that the student—

19 (A) is enrolled in a public secondary
20 school;

21 (B) plans to enroll or is enrolled in a pro-
22 gram described in subsection (a); and

23 (C) has a financial need for assistance with
24 tuition or other costs of attendance related to

1 enrollment in a program described in subsection
2 (a).

3 (2) COLLECTION ASSISTANCE.—Not later than
4 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the
5 Secretary shall issue regulations establishing a pro-
6 cess by which State educational agencies and local
7 educational agencies may elect to collect applications
8 submitted by public secondary school students that
9 are served by such State educational agency or local
10 educational agency for a grant under this section
11 and submit such applications to the Secretary.

12 (c) DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS.—A student that re-
13 ceives a CTE Pell Grant may elect to have CTE Pell
14 Grant funds disbursed directly to a program described in
15 subsection (a) or to the student.

16 (d) REGULATIONS.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the limitation
18 under paragraph (2), the Secretary may issue regu-
19 lations as necessary to carry out this section.

20 (2) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—In issuing regu-
21 lations to establish any terms and conditions (includ-
22 ing eligibility requirements and award amounts) of a
23 CTE Pell Grant under paragraph (1), the Secretary
24 shall, to the extent practicable, model such regula-
25 tions on the terms and conditions of a Federal Pell

1 Grant under section 401 of the Higher Education
2 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a).

3 **SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) CAREER-ALIGNED COURSEWORK.—The term
6 “career-aligned coursework” means academic and
7 technical content designed for students that—

8 (A) aligns with State academic standards;

9 (B) includes instruction on academic and
10 technical knowledge and skills related to career
11 readiness, including instruction aligned to high-
12 skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations;

13 (C) aligns with the needs of industries in
14 the economy of the State, region, or local com-
15 munity of the student;

16 (D) is designed to progress from content
17 that covers industries and careers broadly to
18 content that covers specific elements of an in-
19 dustry or career;

20 (E) provides multiple entry and exit points
21 that allow students to begin, pause, or resume
22 participation as needed, including mid-program
23 or at transitional points between education and
24 employment; and

1 (F) culminates in the attainment of a rec-
2 ognized postsecondary credential.

3 (2) CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION.—The
4 term “career and technical education” or “CTE”
5 has the meaning given the term “career and tech-
6 nical education” in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins
7 Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20
8 U.S.C. 2302).

9 (3) CTE HIGH SCHOOL.—The term “CTE high
10 school” means a public secondary school that pro-
11 vides academic instruction and career and technical
12 education programs, resulting in a regular high
13 school diploma and, where applicable, recognized
14 postsecondary credentials or industry certifications.

15 (4) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “local edu-
16 cational agency”, “secondary school”, and “State
17 educational agency” have the meaning given the
18 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-
19 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

20 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
21 term “institution of higher education” has the
22 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
23 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

24 (6) JUNIOR OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The
25 term “junior or community college” has the meaning

1 given the term in section 312(f) of the Higher Edu-
2 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1058(f)).

3 (7) MULTI-CRAFT CONSTRUCTION INSTRU-
4 TION.—The term “multi-craft construction instruc-
5 tion” means training programs that expose students
6 to multiple construction-related trades and crafts
7 (such as concrete and masonry, ventilation and air
8 conditioning, carpentry, or other such combinations
9 of construction trades and crafts) within a single in-
10 structional framework, often with pathways into reg-
11 istered apprenticeships.

12 (8) OPPORTUNITY YOUTH.—The term “oppor-
13 tunity youth” means people between the ages of 16
14 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor par-
15 ticipating in the labor market.

16 (9) REGIONAL CAREER CENTER.—The term
17 “regional career center” means a centralized edu-
18 cational facility—

19 (A) that provides career and technical edu-
20 cation programs to students enrolled in a sec-
21 ondary school;

22 (B) is operated by a local educational
23 agency, a consortium of local educational agen-
24 cies, or a State educational agency; and

- 1 (C) offers academic instruction aligned to
- 2 high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.

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