

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7798

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide grants to hire and retain school social workers, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 4, 2026

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin (for herself, Ms. SCHOLTEN, and Ms. GARCIA of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide grants to hire and retain school social workers, 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 “School Social Workers
5 Improving Student Success Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER GRANTS.**

7 (a) PURPOSES.—The purpose of this Act is to assist
8 States and local educational agencies in hiring additional
9 school social workers in order to increase access to mental

1 health and other student support services to students in
2 elementary and secondary schools in the United States to
3 the minimum ratios recommended by the National Asso-
4 ciation of Social Workers and the School Social Work As-
5 sociation of America of 1 school social worker for every
6 250 students, and 1 school social worker for every 50 stu-
7 dents when a social worker is providing services to stu-
8 dents with intensive needs.

9 (b) ESEA AMENDMENTS.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subpart 4 of part F of title
11 IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
12 of 1965 (10 U.S.C. 7271 et seq.) is amended by
13 adding at the end the following new section:

14 **“SEC. 4645. GRANTS FOR SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS.**

15 “(a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts appro-
17 priated under subsection (g), the Secretary shall
18 award grants to high-need local educational agencies
19 to enable such agencies to retain school social work-
20 ers employed by such agencies or to hire additional
21 school social workers.

22 “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this
23 section shall be awarded for a period not to exceed
24 4 years.

1 “(3) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds
2 made available under this section shall be used to
3 supplement, and not to supplant, other Federal,
4 State, or local funds used for hiring and retaining
5 school social workers.

6 “(b) APPLICATION.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive a
8 grant under this section, a high-need local edu-
9 cational agency shall submit to the Secretary an ap-
10 plication at such time, in such manner, and con-
11 taining such information as the Secretary may re-
12 quire.

13 “(2) CONTENTS.—An application submitted
14 under paragraph (1) shall include an assurance that
15 each school social worker who receives assistance
16 under the grant will provide the services described in
17 subsection (d), and a description of the specific serv-
18 ices to be provided by such social worker.

19 “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—A high-need local educational
20 agency receiving a grant under this section—

21 “(1) shall use the grant—

22 “(A) to achieve a ratio of not less than 1
23 school social worker for every 250 students
24 served by the agency, by—

1 “(i) retaining school social workers
2 employed by such agency; or

3 “(ii)(I) employing additional school
4 social workers; or

5 “(II) hiring contractors to serve as
6 school social workers only in a case in
7 which—

8 “(aa) the local educational agen-
9 cy demonstrates to the Secretary that
10 the agency—

11 “(AA) has not been able to
12 employ a sufficient number of
13 school social workers under sub-
14 clause (I) to achieve such ratio
15 despite strong and continuing ef-
16 forts to recruit and employ school
17 social workers; and

18 “(BB) hiring contractors is
19 the only viable option to ensure
20 students have adequate access to
21 school social work services; and

22 “(bb) each such contractor meets
23 the requirements of subparagraphs
24 (A) and (B) of subsection (h)(2); and

1 “(B) to ensure that each school social
2 worker who receives assistance under such
3 grant provides the services described in sub-
4 section (d); and

5 “(2) may use the grant to reimburse school so-
6 cial workers who receive assistance under such grant
7 for—

8 “(A) in the case of a school served by the
9 agency in which the majority of students are
10 higher risk students, to hire or retain additional
11 school social workers in accordance with clauses
12 (i) and (ii) of paragraph (1)(A) to achieve a
13 ratio of not less than 1 school social worker for
14 every 50 students;

15 “(B) travel expenses incurred during home
16 visits and other school-related trips;

17 “(C) any additional expenses incurred by
18 such social workers in rendering any service de-
19 scribed in subsection (d); and

20 “(D) the cost of clinical social work super-
21 vision for such social workers.

22 “(d) RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK-
23 ER.—A school social worker who receives assistance under
24 a grant under this section shall provide the following serv-
25 ices:

1 “(1) Identifying high-need students in each
2 school that the social worker serves, and targeting
3 services provided at the school to such students.

4 “(2) Providing students in each school that the
5 school social worker serves, social work services to
6 promote school engagement and improve academic
7 outcomes, including—

8 “(A) counseling and crisis intervention;

9 “(B) trauma-informed services;

10 “(C) evidence-based educational, behav-
11 ioral, and mental health services (such as imple-
12 menting multi-tiered programs and practices,
13 monitoring progress, and evaluating service ef-
14 fectiveness);

15 “(D) addressing the social and emotional
16 learning needs of students;

17 “(E) promoting a school climate and cul-
18 ture conducive to student learning and teaching
19 excellence (such as promoting effective school
20 policies and administrative procedures, enhanc-
21 ing the professional capacity of school per-
22 sonnel, and facilitating engagement between
23 student, family, school, and community);

24 “(F) providing access to school-based and
25 community based resources (such as promoting

1 a continuum of services, mobilizing resources
2 and promoting assets, and providing leadership,
3 interdisciplinary collaboration, systems coordi-
4 nation, professional consultation, and con-
5 necting students and families to resource sys-
6 tems);

7 “(G) working with students, families,
8 schools, and communities to address barriers to
9 educational attainment (such as homelessness
10 and housing insecurity, lack of transportation,
11 food insecurity, equity, social justice issues, ac-
12 cess to quality education, and school, family,
13 and community risk factors);

14 “(H) providing assistance to schools and
15 teachers to design social-emotional, educational,
16 behavioral, and mental health interventions;

17 “(I) case management activities to coordi-
18 nate the delivery of and access to the appro-
19 priate social work services to the highest-need
20 students;

21 “(J) home visits to meet the family of stu-
22 dents in need of social work services in the
23 home environment;

24 “(K) supervising or coordinating district
25 level school social work services; and

1 “(L) other services the Secretary deter-
2 mines, in partnership with students, educators,
3 and community member voices are necessary to
4 be carried out by such a social worker.

5 “(e) GRANT RENEWAL.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A grant awarded under
7 this section may be renewed for additional periods
8 with the same duration as the original grant period.

9 “(2) CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION.—

10 To be eligible for a renewal under this section a
11 high-need local educational agency shall submit to
12 the Secretary, for each renewal, a report on the
13 progress of such agency in retaining and hiring
14 school social workers to achieve the ratio of not less
15 than 1 school social worker for every 250 students
16 served by the agency, and shall include—

17 “(A) a description of the staffing expan-
18 sion of school social workers funded through the
19 original grant received under this section; and

20 “(B) a description of the work conducted
21 by such social workers for higher risk students.

22 “(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide
24 technical assistance to high-need local educational
25 agencies, including such agencies that do not have

1 adequate staff, in applying for grants under this sec-
2 tion.

3 “(2) EXTENSION OF APPLICATION PERIOD.—

4 The Secretary shall extend any application period
5 for a grant under this section for any high-need local
6 educational agency that—

7 “(A) submits to the Secretary a written
8 notification of the intent to apply for a grant
9 under this section before requesting technical
10 assistance under paragraph (1); and

11 “(B) after submitting the notification
12 under paragraph (1), requests such technical
13 assistance.

14 “(g) AUTHORIZATION FOR APPROPRIATIONS.—There
15 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,
16 \$100,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.

17 “(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 “(1) HIGH-NEED LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
19 CY.—The term ‘high-need local educational agency’
20 has the meaning given the term in section 200 of the
21 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1021).

22 “(2) SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER.—The term
23 ‘school social worker’ means an individual who—

1 “(A) has a graduate degree in social work
2 from a social work program that is accredited
3 by the Council on Social Work Education; and

4 “(B) meets all other State and local
5 credentialing requirements for practicing as a
6 social worker in an elementary school or sec-
7 ondary school.”.

8 (2) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of con-
9 tents in section 2 of the Elementary and Secondary
10 Education Act of 1965 is amended by inserting after
11 the item relating to section 4644 the following:

“Sec. 4645. Grants for school social workers.”.

12 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR**
13 **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Education, act-
15 ing through the Assistant Secretary, shall establish an
16 evaluation, documentation, dissemination, and technical
17 assistance resource center to provide appropriate informa-
18 tion, training, and technical assistance to States, political
19 subdivisions of States, federally recognized Indian tribes,
20 tribal organizations, institutions of higher education, State
21 and local educational agencies, and individual students
22 and educators with respect to hiring and retaining school
23 social workers at elementary schools and secondary
24 schools served by local educational agencies.

1 (b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CENTER.—The center
2 established under subsection (a) shall conduct activities
3 for the purpose of—

4 (1) developing and continuing statewide or trib-
5 al strategies for improving the effectiveness of the
6 school social work workforce;

7 (2) studying the costs and effectiveness of
8 school social work programs at institutions of higher
9 education to identify areas of improvement and pro-
10 vide information on relevant issues of importance to
11 State, tribal, and national policymakers;

12 (3) working with Federal agencies and other
13 State, Tribal, and national stakeholders to collect,
14 evaluate, and disseminate data regarding school so-
15 cial work ratios, outcomes and best practices of
16 school-based mental health services, and impact of
17 expanding the number of school social workers with-
18 in elementary schools and secondary schools; and

19 (4) establishing partnerships among National,
20 State, Tribal, and local governments, and local edu-
21 cational agencies, institutions of higher education,
22 non-profit organizations, and State and national
23 trade associations for the purposes of—

24 (A) data collection and dissemination;

1 (B) establishing a school social work work-
2 force development program;

3 (C) documenting the success of school so-
4 cial work methods on a national level; and

5 (D) conducting other activities determined
6 appropriate by the Secretary.

7 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

8 (1) ESEA TERMS.—Except as otherwise pro-
9 vided, any term used in this section that is defined
10 in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary
11 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801) shall have
12 the meaning given that term in such section.

13 (2) SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER.—The term
14 “school social worker” has the meaning given the
15 term in section 4645(h) of the Elementary and Sec-
16 ondary Education Act of 1965, as added by section
17 2(b).

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