

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2571

To amend section 10105 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide for a smaller learning communities grant program.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 19, 2001

Mr. HILL (for himself, Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin, Ms. SANCHEZ, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. HOEFFEL, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. BAIRD, Ms. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. RAHALL, and Mr. SCHIFF) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To amend section 10105 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide for a smaller learning communities grant 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 “Smaller Schools,
5 Stronger Communities Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Since World War II, the conventional wis-
2 dom among educators has been that larger schools
3 are better than smaller schools, and as a result the
4 number of secondary schools in the United States
5 has declined by 70 percent and the average school
6 size has grown to 5 times the previous average size.
7 According to the Department of Education, 70 per-
8 cent of high school students in 2000 attended
9 schools with more than 1,000 students.

10 (2) Over the past few years, educators have
11 begun to question the belief that larger schools are
12 always better. The National Association of Sec-
13 ondary School Principals recently recommended that
14 the high school of the 21st century be much more
15 student-centered and, above all, much more person-
16 alized in programs, support services, and intellectual
17 rigor. Underlying this recommendation are the Asso-
18 ciation's beliefs that students take more interest in
19 school when they have a sense of belonging and that
20 students benefit from a more intimate setting in
21 which their presence is more readily and repeatedly
22 acknowledged.

23 (3) The National Association of Secondary
24 School Principals warns that the "bigness" of high
25 schools shrouds many young people in what the As-

1 society calls “a cloak of anonymity”. To counter-
2 act this effect, the Association recommends that
3 high schools—

4 (A) restructure their layouts and schedules
5 so that students are no longer invisible and able
6 to “melt into their surroundings”;

7 (B) limit their enrollments to units of not
8 more than 600 students, either by constructing
9 new buildings or by creating schools-within-a-
10 school; and

11 (C) change the relationship between teach-
12 ers and students by reducing the number of
13 class changes students are required to make
14 each day and by allowing teachers to spend
15 more time with smaller numbers of students.

16 (4) Research shows that larger schools tend to
17 stratify students into different tracks, which are
18 often based on children’s educational and social
19 backgrounds. The result is inequitable educational
20 outcomes, because at larger schools the gap between
21 the educational achievement of high-achieving and
22 low-achieving students is greater than at smaller
23 schools.

24 (5) Research shows that—

1 (A) in smaller, more personalized, and less
2 bureaucratic schools, the gap between high-
3 achieving and low-achieving students is smaller;

4 (B) students in smaller schools perform
5 better in the core subjects of reading, mathe-
6 matics, history, and science;

7 (C) students in smaller schools are more
8 engaged in their courses;

9 (D) smaller schools have higher attendance
10 rates and higher rates of participation in school
11 activities; and

12 (E) because achievement levels in smaller
13 schools are more equitably distributed, students
14 who come from more disadvantaged economic
15 and educational backgrounds show the greatest
16 achievement gains in smaller schools.

17 (6) In 2000, the Bank Street College of Edu-
18 cation conducted a study, entitled “Small Schools:
19 Great Strides”, of more than 150 small schools in
20 Chicago, Illinois. In the study, researchers found the
21 following:

22 (A) Small schools generated measurable
23 benefits (including higher attendance rates,
24 grade point averages, and graduation rates)

1 even among the most academically disadvan-
2 tagged students.

3 (B) Teachers and parents reported greater
4 satisfaction with small schools.

5 (C) Teachers found that small schools
6 offer a stronger, more collaborative professional
7 learning community and provide opportunities
8 to know students better and to take greater re-
9 sponsibility for their achievement.

10 (D) Parents found that small schools are
11 more accessible, more responsive, and safer.

12 (7) According to a recent study of 13,600
13 schools in Georgia, Montana, Ohio, and Texas—

14 (A) in smaller schools the harmful effects
15 of poverty on student achievement were greatly
16 reduced; and

17 (B) in poorer Texas communities, larger
18 schools had significantly lower test scores than
19 smaller schools.

20 (8) Research shows that smaller schools are
21 safer and that students in smaller schools are less
22 likely to join gangs. According to the 1999 report
23 entitled “Indicators of School Crime and Safety”
24 issued by the National Center for Education Statis-
25 tics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics—

1 (A) the number of criminal acts committed
2 at school and number of incidents of school vio-
3 lence were much lower in schools enrolling be-
4 tween 300 to 1,000 students than in larger
5 schools regardless of location in urban, subur-
6 ban, or rural areas; and

7 (B) on the urban fringe, at schools within
8 metropolitan areas but not in the areas' central
9 cities, larger schools experienced as many as 4
10 times as many incidents of serious violence per
11 1,000 students than smaller schools.

12 (9) Many States and local educational agencies
13 are implementing strategies to reduce the size of
14 their schools, including Florida, where in 2000 Gov-
15 ernor Jeb Bush signed a school safety bill that re-
16 quired new schools to serve smaller student popu-
17 lations. The legislation limited new high schools to
18 900 students.

19 **SEC. 3. SMALLER LEARNING COMMUNITIES GRANT PRO-**
20 **GRAM.**

21 Section 10105 of the Elementary and Secondary
22 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8005) is amended to
23 read as follows:

1 **“SEC. 10105. SMALLER LEARNING COMMUNITIES.**

2 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following
3 definitions apply:

4 “(1) SCHOOL.—The term ‘school’ means an ele-
5 mentary school or a secondary school.

6 “(2) SCHOOL-WITHIN-A-SCHOOL.—The term
7 ‘school-within-a-school’ means a unit within a school
8 that creates a close and consistent academic and ad-
9 ministrative relationship between a group of stu-
10 dents and a group of teachers such that the unit
11 functions as an individualized smaller school, regard-
12 less of how many such schools-within-a-school exist
13 within the larger school.

14 “(3) SMALLER LEARNING COMMUNITY.—The
15 term ‘smaller learning community’ means—

16 “(A) an independent, small school within a
17 single building;

18 “(B) a school-within-a-school; or

19 “(C) any other grouping of students,
20 teachers, or administrators that uses effective
21 or innovative strategies to create a more per-
22 sonalized school experience for students to im-
23 prove student achievement or performance, in-
24 cluding but not limited to strategies that make
25 use of—

26 “(i) career academies or clusters;

1 “(ii) magnet schools;

2 “(iii) restructured daily or school-year
3 schedules; or

4 “(iv) mentoring systems, such as per-
5 sonal adult advocates or teacher advisory
6 systems.

7 “(b) AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS.—In accordance
8 with this section, the Secretary may—

9 “(1) make grants to local educational agencies
10 to enable such agencies to develop plans to create
11 smaller learning communities; and

12 “(2) make grants to local educational agencies
13 to enable such agencies to implement plans to estab-
14 lish such communities.

15 “(c) APPLICATION.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with this
17 subsection, the Secretary shall require that each
18 local educational agency seeking a grant under this
19 section shall submit an application to the Secretary
20 at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by
21 such information as the Secretary may require.

22 “(2) SIMPLE, BRIEF APPLICATION.—In devel-
23 oping applications for the grants described in sub-
24 section (b), the Secretary shall develop an applica-
25 tion that is simple and brief in form.

1 “(3) PLANNING GRANTS.—Each application
2 from a local educational agency for a grant under
3 subsection (b)(1) shall include information relating
4 to each of the following:

5 “(A) The need in the area administered by
6 the local educational agency for 1 or more
7 smaller learning communities.

8 “(B) The process the local educational
9 agency intends to follow in establishing 1 or
10 more smaller learning communities.

11 “(C) The steps the local educational agen-
12 cy intends to follow in order to ensure the via-
13 bility of each smaller learning community to be
14 assisted with the grant.

15 “(D) For each smaller learning community
16 to be assisted with the grant, the non-Federal
17 resources that will be available to the local edu-
18 cational agency from each of the following:

19 “(i) Any existing school at which the
20 smaller learning community will be located.

21 “(ii) The school district, or area ad-
22 ministered by the local educational agency,
23 in which the smaller learning community
24 will be located.

1 “(4) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—Each appli-
2 cation from a local educational agency for a grant
3 under subsection (b)(2) shall include information re-
4 lating to each of the following:

5 “(A) The strategies and methods the local
6 educational agency intends to use to create each
7 smaller learning community.

8 “(B) The curriculum and instructional
9 practices, including any particular themes or
10 emphases, to be used in the learning environ-
11 ment.

12 “(C) The degree of involvement of teach-
13 ers, and other school personnel, in inves-
14 tigating, designing, implementing, and sus-
15 taining each smaller learning community.

16 “(D) The process to be used for involving
17 students, parents, and other stakeholders in the
18 development and implementation of each small-
19 er learning community.

20 “(E) Any cooperation or collaboration
21 among community agencies, organizations, busi-
22 nesses, and others to develop or implement a
23 plan to create each smaller learning community.

24 “(F) The training and professional devel-
25 opment activities that will be offered to teachers

1 and others involved in the activities for which
2 the grant is sought.

3 “(G) The goals and objectives of the activi-
4 ties for which the grant is sought, including a
5 description of how such activities will better en-
6 able all students to reach challenging State con-
7 tent standards and State student performance
8 standards.

9 “(H) The methods by which the local edu-
10 cational agency will assess progress in meeting
11 the goals and objectives described in subpara-
12 graph (G).

13 “(I) With respect to any smaller learning
14 community that will be a school-within-a-school,
15 the relationship, including governance and ad-
16 ministration, between the smaller learning com-
17 munity and the rest of the school.

18 “(J) The administrative and managerial
19 relationship between the local educational agen-
20 cy and each smaller learning community, in-
21 cluding how such agency intends to ensure the
22 continuity of the smaller learning community
23 and the continuity of student and teacher as-
24 signment to such community.

1 “(K) How the local educational agency in-
2 tends to coordinate the use of the proceeds of
3 the grant with the use of other funds provided
4 under this Act or under other Federal laws.

5 “(L) The grade levels or ages of students
6 who will participate in each smaller learning
7 community.

8 “(M) The method of placing students in
9 each smaller learning community.

10 “(d) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—

11 “(1) PLANNING GRANTS.—The proceeds of a
12 grant made under subsection (b)(1) may be used for
13 any of the following:

14 “(A) Study of the feasibility of creating a
15 smaller learning community.

16 “(B) Study of effective and innovative or-
17 ganizational and instructional strategies for use
18 in 1 or more smaller learning communities.

19 “(C) Research on and development of
20 strategies for creating 1 or more smaller learn-
21 ing communities.

22 “(D) Research on and development of, for
23 1 or more smaller learning communities, effec-
24 tive and innovative curriculums and methods of
25 instruction designed to meet high State content

1 standards and State student performance
2 standards.

3 “(E) Provision of professional development
4 in innovative teaching methods that challenge
5 and engage students to the staff of 1 or more
6 smaller learning communities.

7 “(F) Development of strategies for the
8 participation in 1 or more smaller learning com-
9 munities of parents, business representatives,
10 local institutions of higher education, commu-
11 nity-based organizations, and other community
12 members, as facilitators of activities that pro-
13 vide professional development for teachers or
14 that provide links between students and their
15 local community.

16 “(G) Any other reasonable expense, includ-
17 ing architectural fees to design or remodel
18 school facilities, but not including the costs di-
19 rectly associated with the renovation of existing
20 facilities or the purchase or construction of new
21 facilities.

22 “(2) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—The proceeds
23 of a grant made under subsection (b)(2) may be
24 used for any of the following:

1 “(A) Implementing strategies for creating
2 1 or more smaller learning communities.

3 “(B) Implementing within 1 or more
4 smaller learning communities effective and in-
5 novative curriculums and methods of instruc-
6 tion designed to meet high State content stand-
7 ards and State student performance standards.

8 “(C) Implementing strategies for the par-
9 ticipation in 1 or more smaller learning commu-
10 nities of parents, business representatives, local
11 institutions of higher education, community-
12 based organizations, and other community
13 members, as facilitators of activities that pro-
14 vide professional development for teachers or
15 that provide links between students and their
16 local community.

17 “(D) Any other reasonable expense, includ-
18 ing architectural fees to design or remodel
19 school facilities, but not including the costs di-
20 rectly associated with the renovation of existing
21 facilities or the purchase or construction of new
22 facilities.

23 “(e) **EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.**—In making grants
24 under this section, the Secretary shall ensure that the re-
25 cipients of grants under subsection (b)(1) and the recipi-

1 ents of grants under subsection (b)(2) are equitably dis-
2 tributed among urban, suburban, and rural areas of the
3 United States.

4 “(f) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary
5 shall require as a condition of receipt of each grant under
6 this section that the grant recipient transmit to the Sec-
7 retary a report on how the proceeds of the grant were
8 used.

9 “(g) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—To further assist
10 local educational agencies with respect to planning for or
11 implementation of smaller learning communities, the Sec-
12 retary may—

13 “(1) provide technical assistance to such local
14 educational agencies ; and

15 “(2) participate in networking activities.

16 “(h) SECRETARY’S USE OF FUNDS.—In each fiscal
17 year, the Secretary may use not more than a total of 5
18 percent of the amount authorized under subsection (j)
19 for—

20 “(1) evaluation of the program authorized by
21 this section;

22 “(2) the provision of technical assistance under
23 subsection (g)(1); and

24 “(3) networking activities under subsection
25 (g)(2).

1 “(i) STUDY.—The Secretary shall conduct a study
2 to—

3 “(1) build on existing research in the smaller
4 learning communities field;

5 “(2) evaluate and compare outcomes at various
6 types of smaller learning communities, including
7 smaller learning communities in urban, suburban,
8 and rural school districts; and

9 “(3) track the effectiveness of smaller learning
10 communities.

11 “(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
12 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
13 \$200,000,000 for fiscal year 2002 and such sums as may
14 be necessary for the 4 succeeding fiscal years.”.

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