

Our amendment would help ensure adequate funding for a grant program available to States, including my home State of Pennsylvania, to tailor assessment systems to work for teachers, parents, and students. The amendment would provide \$378 million in funding for State assessment grants, the amount authorized for these grants in the Every Student Succeeds Act but, notably, \$8.9 million more than that which was included in the legislation we are currently debating.

Including full funding for State assessment grants is a critical way for Congress to fulfill our promise under ESSA that we would streamline testing so the high-stakes testing culture that has burdened schools and students for too long is rolled back.

I thank the chairman and ranking member for the opportunity to offer this amendment, and I urge the adoption of the en bloc amendment.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Chair, I rise in support of this bi-partisan amendment that would increase funding for the Black Lung Clinics Programs in the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) by \$2.7 million. This increase, when added to the \$7.2 million provided in the appropriations bill being considered, will provide \$10 million in total funding for Fiscal Year 2018. I want to commend Representative GRIFFITH for his leadership on this issue.

The additional funding proposed by the amendment is fully offset by a reduction in program management, and the total amount of \$10 million is equal to the permanently authorized amount. That level, I would note, has remained the same since the Black Lung Clinics Program was first authorized in the 92nd Congress as part of the Black Lung Benefits Act of 1972.

Today, there are 28 black lung clinics located in 15 coal mining states which, with small grants provided by HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, serve as a lifeline for disabled miners.

In many cases, these coal miners spent a lifetime working in our nation's mines, but now face black lung disease—a debilitating and frequently fatal lung disease that continues to erode lung function even after a miner leaves work in the mines. Since 1968, 76,000 miners have lost their lives to black lung disease.

The black lung clinics program is expected to serve 13,800 miners this year. The need for these clinics is rising due to an increase in the number of black lung cases, coupled with an increased number of miners who are now seeking assistance following the closure of mines.

The rate of black lung disease in coal miners fell steadily in the 30 years following the enactment of binding coal dust exposure limits in the 1969 Coal Mine Safety and Health Act. However, that favorable downward trend started to reverse beginning in 2000, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). NIOSH is also finding that miners are becoming totally disabled from black lung at much younger ages.

The increase in black lung disease has been due in part to longer mining shifts, more

powerful mining machinery, and mine operators cutting into more rock because the easiest reach coal has been mined out. Much of that rock is quartz bearing sandstone which, when mined, releases large amounts of silica containing mine dust that is far more toxic than coal dust.

The most severe form of black lung disease, known as progressive massive fibrosis or PMF, has spiked dramatically. Earlier this year, NIOSH reported that the Stone Mountain Resources clinic in southwest Virginia had identified the largest cluster of PMF ever found—over 400 cases. National Public Radio has reported on large clusters in Kentucky and other states.

PMF produces large masses of scar tissue in the lung, and often the only means for survival is undergoing a high-risk lung transplant.

While funding for the black lung clinics has been frozen at virtually the same level for the past 5 years, a number of clinics, including many of those in Appalachia, have faced substantial increase in demand from coal miners for screening, diagnosis and pulmonary rehabilitation.

Clinics provide benefits counseling, including assisting miners with federal black lung benefits and state compensation claims.

Some clinics are so underfunded that they are operating with obsolete and inefficient diagnostic equipment, which needs to be upgraded.

Mr. Chair, we owe it to coal miners to get them the care and benefits they need and deserve. I urge a yes vote.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendments en bloc offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

The en bloc amendments were agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed bills and agreed to a joint resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 102. An act to direct the Federal Communications Commission to commence proceedings related to the resiliency of critical communications networks during times of emergency, and for other purposes.

S. 327. An act to direct the Securities and Exchange Commission to provide a safe harbor related to certain investment fund research reports, and for other purposes.

S. 416. An act to amend the Small Business Investment Incentive Act of 1980 to require an annual review by the Securities and Exchange Commission of the annual government-business forum on capital formation.

S. 444. An act to amend the Investment Company Act of 1940 to expand the investor limitation for qualifying venture capital funds under an exemption from the definition of an investment company.

S. 462. An act to require the Securities and Exchange Commission to refund or credit certain excess payments made to the Commission.

S. 494. An act to amend the Investment Company Act of 1940 to terminate an exemp-

tion for companies located in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and any other possession of the United States.

S. 488. An act to increase the threshold for disclosures required by the Securities and Exchange Commission relating to compensatory benefit plans, and for other purposes.

S. 1311. An act to provide assistance in abolishing human trafficking in the United States.

S. 1312. An act to prioritize the fight against human trafficking in the United States.

S.J. Res 49. Joint Resolution condemning the violence and domestic terrorist attack that took place during events between August 11 and August 12, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, recognizing the first responders who lost their lives while monitoring the events, offering deepest condolences to the families and friends of those individuals who were killed and deepest sympathies and support to those individuals who were injured by the violence, expressing support for the Charlottesville community, rejecting White nationalists, White supremacists, the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, and other hate groups, and urging the President and the President's Cabinet to use all available resources to address the threats posed by those groups.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2018

The Committee resumed its sitting.

AMENDMENT NO. 131 OFFERED BY MR. KILDEE

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. GRIFFITH). It is now in order to consider amendment No. 131 printed in House Report 115-297.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 693, line 18, after the dollar amount, insert the following: “(increased by \$10,000,000)”.

Page 693, line 24, after the dollar amount, insert the following: “(increased by \$10,000,000)”.

Page 694, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert the following: “(increased by \$10,000,000)”.

Page 718, line 15, after the first dollar amount, insert the following: “(decreased by \$10,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 504, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of my amendment that would increase funding for youth employment initiatives by \$10 million.

Michigan's unemployment rate is 4.7 percent, but for youth aged 16 to 24, it is more than double that, over 11 percent. Young people face high unemployment, and the lack of opportunity to find meaning in the world of work has implications that go far beyond just those years that they might find meaningful employment.

Investing in those young Americans ensures that they all do better. Providing those important employment