

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4668

To promote digital citizenship and media literacy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 11, 2019

Ms. SLOTKIN (for herself, Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. HOULAHAN, Ms. UNDERWOOD, Ms. SPANBERGER, Ms. SHERRILL, and Ms. TORRES SMALL of New Mexico) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To promote digital citizenship and media literacy.

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 “Digital Citizenship and
5 Media Literacy Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) People in the United States rely on infor-
9 mation from mass media, social media, and digital
10 media to make decisions about all aspects of social,
11 economic, and political life, including products and

1 services consumption, employment, career and pro-
2 fessional development, family and leisure choices,
3 health and wellness, and democratic engagement.
4 Ensuring that people in the United States possess
5 the skills to make these informed decisions based on
6 media begins early in life.

7 (2) Adversaries from Russia, China, and Iran
8 are using information warfare to influence democ-
9 racies across the world, and terrorist organizations
10 often use digital communications to recruit mem-
11 bers. The United States can fight these influences
12 by ensuring that citizens of the United States pos-
13 sess the necessary skills to discern disinformation
14 and misinformation and think critically about their
15 digital activities.

16 (3) Influence campaigns by foreign and domes-
17 tic groups reached tens of millions of voters during
18 the 2016 and 2018 elections with racially and divi-
19 sively targeted messages. The preservation of elec-
20 tions free of foreign influence is of utmost impor-
21 tance, and therefore Congress must take steps to
22 counter influence campaigns with media literacy.

23 (4) Media literacy education is critical to allow
24 young people to make informed decisions about
25 products and services, education, health and well-

1 ness, and democratic decisions associated with public
2 policy. Media literacy education must be inclusive
3 and accessible for all students, including at-risk stu-
4 dents and students with disabilities. Media literacy
5 empowers young people and gives them the agency
6 to make informed decisions about their future, ad-
7 vertisements, the use of controlled substances, nutri-
8 tion, and physical health. Equipping students with
9 the skills to make informed decisions in these areas
10 contributes to the betterment of mental health and
11 public health.

12 (5) A successful and inclusive media literacy
13 program must be directed at students beginning in
14 kindergarten and should continue throughout the
15 completion of postsecondary education. Learning to
16 critically analyze and create media is a lifelong proc-
17 ess that can be developed by integrating media lit-
18 eracy competencies into academic curriculum across
19 content areas and disciplines.

20 (6) Media literacy also allows young people to
21 develop the critical thinking skills that will help
22 them become informed voters. The right to vote is
23 a fundamental right afforded to United States citi-
24 zens by the Constitution. The unimpeded free exer-
25 cise of this right is essential to the functioning of

1 our democracy. The process to protect our democ-
2 racy begins with educating young people in the
3 United States to ensure that the young people pos-
4 sess the skills to engage in civic activities, engage
5 with communities, and eventually become informed
6 voters.

7 **SEC. 3. GRANT PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) AT-RISK.—The term “at-risk” has the
10 meaning given the term in section 1432 of the Ele-
11 mentary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20
12 U.S.C. 6472).

13 (2) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “child
14 with a disability”, “local educational agency”, “State
15 educational agency”, “specialized instructional sup-
16 port personnel”, and “universal design for learning”
17 have the meanings given those terms in section 8101
18 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
19 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

20 (3) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
21 ty” means—

22 (A) a State educational agency; or

23 (B) a local educational agency.

24 (4) DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP.—The term “digital
25 citizenship” means the ability to—

1 (A) safely, responsibly, and ethically use
2 communication technologies and digital infor-
3 mation technology tools and platforms;

4 (B) create and share media content using
5 principles of social and civic responsibility and
6 with awareness of the legal and ethical issues
7 involved; and

8 (C) participate in the political, economic,
9 social, and cultural aspects of life related to
10 technology, communications, and the digital
11 world by consuming and creating digital con-
12 tent, including media.

13 (5) MEDIA LITERACY.—The term “media lit-
14 eracy” means the ability to—

15 (A) access relevant and accurate informa-
16 tion through media in a variety of forms;

17 (B) critically analyze media content and
18 the influences of different forms of media;

19 (C) evaluate the comprehensiveness, rel-
20 evance, credibility, authority, and accuracy of
21 information;

22 (D) make educated decisions based on in-
23 formation obtained from media and digital
24 sources;

1 (E) operate various forms of technology
2 and digital tools; and

3 (F) reflect on how the use of media and
4 technology may affect private and public life.

5 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
6 the Secretary of Education.

7 (b) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a
8 program to promote media literacy, through which the
9 Secretary shall award grants to eligible entities to enable
10 those eligible entities to carry out the activities described
11 in this subsection (d).

12 (c) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires a
13 grant under this section shall submit an application to the
14 Secretary at such time and in such manner as the Sec-
15 retary may require, including, at a minimum—

16 (1) a description of the activities the eligible en-
17 tity intends to carry out with the grant funds;

18 (2) an estimate of the costs associated with
19 such activities; and

20 (3) such other information and assurances as
21 the Secretary may require.

22 (d) USE OF FUNDS.—

23 (1) STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—

24 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
25 is a State educational agency receiving a grant

1 under this Act shall use grant funds to carry
2 out one or more of the following activities:

3 (i) Creating and supporting a media
4 literacy advisory council to—

5 (I) provide recommendations
6 about digital citizenship and media lit-
7 eracy guidelines;

8 (II) identify barriers and oppor-
9 tunities for implementing media lit-
10 eracy in kindergarten through grade
11 12 in public schools in the State for
12 all students, including students who
13 are children with disabilities;

14 (III) identify best practices and
15 effective models for media literacy ed-
16 ucation, including incorporating uni-
17 versal design for learning and pro-
18 viding additional accommodations for
19 students who are children with dis-
20 abilities when needed;

21 (IV) identify existing models of
22 curriculum and existing policies in dif-
23 ferent States that are aimed at over-
24 coming the barriers identified in sub-
25 clause (II);

1 (V) gather data or conduct re-
2 search to assess the media literacy
3 and digital citizenship competencies of
4 students, teachers, or specialized in-
5 structional support personnel;

6 (VI) submit a report to the State
7 educational agency containing findings
8 and recommendations regarding the
9 items identified under this clause; and

10 (VII) annually update those find-
11 ings and recommendations.

12 (ii) Assisting local educational agen-
13 cies in the development of units of instruc-
14 tion on media literacy, either as a new sub-
15 ject or as a part of the existing curriculum.

16 (iii) Assisting local agencies in devel-
17 oping means of evaluating student learning
18 in media literacy.

19 (iv) Assisting local agencies in devel-
20 oping or providing professional develop-
21 ment for teachers that relates to media lit-
22 eracy.

23 (B) MEDIA LITERACY ADVISORY COUN-
24 CIL.—

1 (i) MEMBERS.—The Media Literacy
2 Advisory Council described in subpara-
3 graph (A)(i) shall include experts in media
4 literacy, including academic experts, indi-
5 viduals from nonprofit organizations, indi-
6 viduals with expertise in education for stu-
7 dents who are children with disabilities,
8 teachers, librarians, representatives from
9 parent organizations, educators, adminis-
10 trators, students, and other stakeholders.

11 (ii) DIVERSITY OF REPRESENTA-
12 TION.—Such membership shall include rep-
13 resentation from rural and urban local
14 educational agencies, small and large
15 schools, high- and low-resource schools,
16 teachers of at-risk students and children
17 with disabilities, and schools in commu-
18 nities from diverse racial and ethnic back-
19 grounds.

20 (C) GUIDELINES.—

21 (i) IN GENERAL.—A State educational
22 agency that creates a media literacy advi-
23 sory council under subparagraph (A)(i)
24 shall, only after consideration of the find-
25 ings and recommendations described in

1 subparagraph (A)(i)(I) and (VI), develop
2 and publish on the State educational agen-
3 cy website inclusive digital citizenship and
4 media literacy guidelines for students in
5 kindergarten through grade 12 in public
6 schools in the State.

7 (ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The guidelines
8 described in clause (i) shall be designed to
9 develop media literacy and digital citizen-
10 ship competencies by promoting stu-
11 dents’—

12 (I) research and information flu-
13 ency;

14 (II) critical thinking and problem
15 solving skills;

16 (III) technology operations and
17 concepts;

18 (IV) information and techno-
19 logical literacy;

20 (V) concepts of media representa-
21 tion and stereotyping;

22 (VI) understanding of explicit
23 and implicit media messages;

1 (VII) understanding of values
2 and points of view that are included
3 and excluded in media content;

4 (VIII) understanding of how
5 media may influence ideas and behav-
6 iors;

7 (IX) understanding of the impor-
8 tance of obtaining information from
9 multiple media sources and evaluating
10 sources for quality;

11 (X) understanding how informa-
12 tion on digital platforms can be al-
13 tered through algorithms, editing, and
14 augmented reality; and

15 (XI) ability to create media in
16 civically and socially responsible ways.

17 (2) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—An eligi-
18 ble entity that is a local educational agency receiving
19 a grant under this Act shall use grant funds to carry
20 out one or more of the following activities:

21 (A) Incorporating digital citizenship and
22 media literacy into the existing curriculum
23 (across content and disciplinary areas) or estab-
24 lishing new educational opportunities to learn
25 about media literacy.

1 (B) Employing specialized instructional
2 support personnel, such as a librarian or other
3 personnel who can provide instructional services
4 in media literacy.

5 (C) Providing funding to educators who
6 are carrying out activities described in subpara-
7 graph (A) to further their professional develop-
8 ment in relation to media literacy, including
9 funding for traveling to media literacy con-
10 ferences to share knowledge with regional and
11 national stakeholders.

12 (D) Other activities, including student led
13 efforts, to support, develop, or promote the im-
14 plementation of media literacy education pro-
15 grams, policies, teacher preparation, cur-
16 riculum, or standards.

17 (e) REPORTING.—

18 (1) REPORTS BY ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—Not
19 later than 1 year after the date the eligible entity re-
20 ceives grant funds under this Act, each eligible enti-
21 ty shall prepare and submit to the Secretary a re-
22 port describing the activities the eligible entity car-
23 ried out using grant funds and the effectiveness of
24 those activities.

1 (2) REPORT BY THE SECRETARY.—Not later
2 than 90 days after the Secretary receives the report
3 described in paragraph (1) from the last eligible en-
4 tity to submit such a report, the Secretary shall pre-
5 pare and submit a report to Congress describing the
6 activities carried out under this Act and the effec-
7 tiveness of those activities.

8 **SEC. 4. FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a
10 Federal Advisory Council to assist the Secretary in evalu-
11 ating and awarding grants under this section 3 and devel-
12 oping and making available to States and local educational
13 agencies evidence-based model curricula and standards for
14 media literacy education.

15 (b) COMPOSITION.—The Advisory Council shall—

16 (1) include representation from rural and urban
17 local educational agencies, small and large schools,
18 high- and low-resource schools, teachers of children
19 with disabilities, and schools in communities from
20 diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds; and

21 (2) be composed of experts in media literacy
22 and digital citizenship, including academic experts,
23 individuals from nonprofit organizations, individuals
24 with expertise in education for at-risk students, and
25 students who are children with disabilities, teachers,

1 librarians, representatives from parent associations,
2 educators, administrators, students, and other stake-
3 holders.

4 **SEC. 5. GAO STUDY.**

5 Not later than 180 days after the enactment of this
6 Act, the Government Accountability Office shall submit a
7 report to Congress on—

8 (1) media literacy and digital citizenship com-
9 petencies among elementary school and secondary
10 school students in diverse local educational agencies,
11 including rural and urban schools, small and large
12 schools, high- and low-resource schools, and schools
13 in communities from diverse racial and ethnic back-
14 grounds;

15 (2) media literacy and digital citizenship edu-
16 cation programs at the State and local levels, includ-
17 ing across content and disciplinary areas; and

18 (3) the impact of media literacy and digital citi-
19 zenship education on student outcomes, including
20 academic performance, health and well-being, and
21 civic engagement.

22 **SEC. 6. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

23 It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should
24 establish and maintain a list of eligible entities that receive
25 a grant under this Act, and individuals designated by

1 those eligible entities as participating individuals. The
2 Secretary should make that list available to those eligible
3 entities and participating individuals in order to promote
4 communication and further exchange of information re-
5 garding sound digital citizenship and media literacy prac-
6 tices among recipients of a grant under this Act.

7 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

8 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
9 this Act \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2020, 2022,
10 and 2024.

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