

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2240

To promote digital citizenship and media literacy.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 23, 2019

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. BENNET, Ms. SMITH, and Mr. PETERS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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 by
12 ensuring that citizens of the United States possess
13 the necessary skills to discern disinformation and
14 misinformation and think critically about their dig-
15 ital 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

1 wellness, and democratic decisions associated with
2 public policy. Media literacy education must be in-
3 clusive and accessible for all students, including stu-
4 dents with disabilities. Media literacy empowers
5 young people and gives them the agency to make in-
6 formed decisions about their future, advertisements,
7 the use of controlled substances, nutrition, and phys-
8 ical health. Equipping students with the skills to
9 make informed decisions in these areas contributes
10 to the betterment of mental health and public
11 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) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “child with
10 a disability”, “local educational agency”, “State edu-
11 cational agency”, “specialized instructional support
12 personnel”, and “universal design for learning” have
13 the meanings given those terms in section 8101 of
14 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
15 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

16 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
17 ty” means—

18 (A) a State educational agency; or

19 (B) a local educational agency.

20 (3) DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP.—The term “digital
21 citizenship” means the ability to—

22 (A) safely, responsibly, and ethically use
23 communication technologies and digital infor-
24 mation technology tools and platforms;

1 (B) create and share media content using
2 principles of social and civic responsibility and
3 with awareness of the legal and ethical issues
4 involved; and

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

10 (4) MEDIA LITERACY.—The term “media lit-
11 eracy” means the ability to—

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

14 (B) critically analyze media content and
15 the influences of different forms of media;

16 (C) evaluate the comprehensiveness, rel-
17 evance, credibility, authority, and accuracy of
18 information;

19 (D) make educated decisions based on in-
20 formation obtained from media and digital
21 sources;

22 (E) operate various forms of technology
23 and digital tools; and

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

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

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

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

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

14 (2) an estimate of the costs associated with
15 such activities; and

16 (3) such other information and assurances as
17 the Secretary may require.

18 (d) USE OF FUNDS.—

19 (1) STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that
21 is a State educational agency receiving a grant
22 under this Act shall use grant funds to carry
23 out one or more of the following activities:

24 (i) Creating and supporting a media
25 literacy advisory council to—

1 (I) provide recommendations
2 about digital citizenship and media lit-
3 eracy guidelines;

4 (II) identify barriers and oppor-
5 tunities for implementing media lit-
6 eracy in kindergarten through grade
7 12 in public schools in the State for
8 all students, including students who
9 are children with disabilities;

10 (III) identify best practices and
11 effective models for media literacy
12 education, including incorporating
13 universal design for learning and pro-
14 viding additional accommodations for
15 students who are children with dis-
16 abilities when needed;

17 (IV) identify existing models of
18 curriculum and existing policies in dif-
19 ferent States that are aimed at over-
20 coming the barriers identified in sub-
21 clause (II);

22 (V) gather data or conduct re-
23 search to assess the media literacy
24 and digital citizenship competencies of

1 students, teachers, or specialized in-
2 structional support personnel;

3 (VI) submit a report to the State
4 educational agency containing findings
5 and recommendations regarding the
6 items identified under this clause; and

7 (VII) annually update those find-
8 ings and recommendations.

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

13 (iii) Assisting local agencies in devel-
14 oping means of evaluating student learning
15 in media literacy.

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

20 (B) MEDIA LITERACY ADVISORY COUN-
21 CIL.—

22 (i) MEMBERS.—The media literacy
23 advisory council described in subparagraph
24 (A)(i) shall include experts in media lit-
25 eracy, including academic experts, individ-

1 uals from nonprofit organizations, individ-
2 uals with expertise in education for stu-
3 dents who are children with disabilities,
4 teachers, librarians, representatives from
5 parent organizations, educators, adminis-
6 trators, students, and other stakeholders.

7 (ii) DIVERSITY OF REPRESENTA-
8 TION.—Such membership shall include rep-
9 resentation from rural and urban local
10 educational agencies, small and large
11 schools, high- and low-resource schools,
12 teachers of students with disabilities, and
13 schools in communities from diverse racial
14 and ethnic backgrounds.

15 (C) GUIDELINES.—

16 (i) IN GENERAL.—A State educational
17 agency that creates a media literacy advi-
18 sory council under subparagraph (A)(i)
19 shall, only after consideration of the find-
20 ings and recommendations described in
21 subparagraph (A)(i)(I) and (VI), develop
22 and publish on the State educational agen-
23 cy website inclusive digital citizenship and
24 media literacy guidelines for students in

1 kindergarten through grade 12 in public
2 schools in the State.

3 (ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The guidelines
4 described in clause (i) shall be designed to
5 develop media literacy and digital citizen-
6 ship competencies by promoting stu-
7 dents’—

8 (I) research and information flu-
9 ency;

10 (II) critical thinking and problem
11 solving skills;

12 (III) technology operations and
13 concepts;

14 (IV) information and techno-
15 logical literacy;

16 (V) concepts of media representa-
17 tion and stereotyping;

18 (VI) understanding of explicit
19 and implicit media messages;

20 (VII) understanding of values
21 and points of view that are included
22 and excluded in media content;

23 (VIII) understanding of how
24 media may influence ideas and behav-
25 iors;

1 (IX) understanding of the impor-
2 tance of obtaining information from
3 multiple media sources and evaluating
4 sources for quality;

5 (X) understanding how informa-
6 tion on digital platforms can be al-
7 tered through algorithms, editing, and
8 augmented reality; and

9 (XI) ability to create media in
10 civically and socially responsible ways.

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

15 (A) Incorporating digital citizenship and
16 media literacy into the existing curriculum
17 (across content and disciplinary areas) or estab-
18 lishing new educational opportunities to learn
19 about media literacy.

20 (B) Employing specialized instructional
21 support personnel, such as a librarian or other
22 personnel who can provide instructional services
23 in media literacy.

24 (C) Providing funding to educators who
25 are carrying out activities described in subpara-

1 graph (A) to further their professional develop-
2 ment in relation to media literacy, including
3 funding for traveling to media literacy con-
4 ferences to share knowledge with regional and
5 national stakeholders.

6 (D) Other activities, including student led
7 efforts, to support, develop, or promote the im-
8 plementation of media literacy education pro-
9 grams, policies, teacher preparation, cur-
10 riculum, or standards.

11 (e) REPORTING.—

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

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

1 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

2 It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should
3 establish and maintain a list of eligible entities that receive
4 a grant under this Act, and individuals designated by
5 those eligible entities as participating individuals. The
6 Secretary should make that list available to those eligible
7 entities and participating individuals in order to promote
8 communication and further exchange of information re-
9 garding sound digital citizenship and media literacy prac-
10 tices among recipients of a grant under this Act.

11 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

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

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