

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2887

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address and take action to combat rural teacher shortages across the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 18, 2019

Mr. JONES introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address and take action to combat rural teacher shortages across the United States.

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 “Classrooms Reflecting
5 Communities Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) There are persistent shortages across the
9 Nation of teachers in high-demand fields and sub-

1 jects. These include science, mathematics, special
2 education, and teachers of English learners.

3 (2) More than 40 percent of all small, rural
4 school districts in the United States struggle with
5 adequately staffing their schools. Rural districts in
6 particular face high teacher vacancies in special edu-
7 cation and STEM fields and have greater difficulty
8 filling the position of teachers of English learners
9 than urban and suburban districts.

10 (3) Research shows that teacher shortages have
11 serious consequences for student achievement, the
12 economic well-being of a school district, and the
13 overall effectiveness of the teaching workforce. Fur-
14 ther, a growing body of research reveals a substan-
15 tial amount of differences schools can make are at-
16 tributable to teachers.

17 (4) Additionally, previous research estimated
18 that 40 percent of schools do not have any teachers
19 of color on staff, and more recent data suggest that
20 teachers of color remain more likely to teach in
21 urban schools and schools where a greater percent-
22 age of students are eligible for a free or reduced
23 price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National
24 School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.).

1 (5) Research shows that teachers of color help
2 close achievement gaps and are viewed positively by
3 all students. Research also demonstrates benefits, in-
4 cluding improved academic achievement, greater
5 educational attainment, and higher academic aspira-
6 tions, for students of color who are taught by teach-
7 ers of color. Likewise, it is important for all stu-
8 dents, not just students of color, to have diverse
9 teachers and leaders in their schools.

10 (6) Strategies to address teacher shortages are
11 multi-faceted and should follow broader efforts to
12 modernize and elevate the teaching profession. For
13 example, efforts to improve recruitment and prepa-
14 ration of teachers will be more effective if imple-
15 mented in conjunction with policies to improve the
16 working conditions of teachers, elevate the profession
17 through improved selectivity, comprehensive and rig-
18 orous preparation, and higher pay, and professional
19 development and other supports.

20 (7) Research shows that Grow Your Own Pro-
21 grams can be an effective strategy to recruit diverse,
22 well-qualified candidates to the profession and pre-
23 pare them with the needs of the community and
24 school district in mind. According to the Learning
25 Policy Institute, Grow Your Own programs have

1 shown positive results in recruiting and retaining di-
 2 verse teachers in the hardest to staff schools, in part
 3 by leveraging participants’ existing connections to
 4 the community and prior experience working closely
 5 with the student population.

6 **SEC. 3. GROWING THE RURAL EDUCATOR WORKFORCE.**

7 Part B of title V of the Elementary and Secondary
 8 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7341 et seq.) is amend-
 9 ed—

10 (1) by redesignating subpart 3 as subpart 4;

11 and

12 (2) by inserting after subpart 2 the following:

13 **“Subpart 3—Growing the Rural Educator Workforce**

14 **“SEC. 5228. GROWING THE RURAL EDUCATOR WORKFORCE.**

15 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

16 “(1) 2+2 PROGRAM.—The term ‘2+2 program’
 17 means a partnership between a junior or community
 18 college, as defined in section 312 of the Higher Edu-
 19 cation Act of 1965, and a 4-year degree-granting in-
 20 stitution of higher education, in which teacher can-
 21 didates begin teacher preparation in the junior or
 22 community college and fully transfer their credits to
 23 the 4-year degree-granting institution of higher edu-
 24 cation where the students complete their teacher
 25 preparation.

1 “(2) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—The term ‘eligi-
2 ble partnership’ means a partnership as follows:

3 “(A) That includes one of the following:

4 “(i) A school, department, or program
5 of education within a public or other non-
6 profit institution of higher education, in-
7 cluding a graduate level program, that is
8 State-accredited and is eligible to receive
9 Federal funds under title IV of the Higher
10 Education Act of 1965, which may include
11 a teacher preparation program in existence
12 on the date of enactment of the Class-
13 rooms Reflecting Communities Act of
14 2019, which may include a community col-
15 lege in partnership with such an institu-
16 tion.

17 “(ii) A local educational agency.

18 “(iii) A State-accredited nonprofit
19 educational organization that provides al-
20 ternative routes to State certification of
21 teachers.

22 “(B) That includes one of the following:

23 “(i) A rural high-need local edu-
24 cational agency.

1 “(ii) A rural high-need school served
 2 by a rural high-need local educational
 3 agency, or a consortium of such schools.

4 “(C) That may include an optional part-
 5 ner.

6 “(3) GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAM.—The term
 7 ‘Grow Your Own Program’ means a program that—

8 “(A) is designed to counteract a local
 9 teacher shortage problem or increase teacher di-
 10 versity;

11 “(B) collaborates with the local commu-
 12 nity, schools, and other organizations to identify
 13 what the education needs of the community are;

14 “(C) supports teacher candidates in devel-
 15 oping the skills needed to personalize instruc-
 16 tion, provide culturally responsive pedagogy,
 17 and effectively support students with disabilities
 18 and English learners;

19 “(D) supports the preparation of teachers
 20 through extensive clinical experience that is
 21 connected to their coursework in schools in the
 22 community, including schools in the eligible
 23 partnership, as they complete and earn their
 24 teaching or school leadership credential and
 25 may include a 2+2 program;

1 “(E) integrates career-focused courses on
2 education topics with school-based learning ex-
3 perience;

4 “(F) provides a high-quality mentoring
5 program for teacher candidates to support the
6 candidates through their first 2 years of teach-
7 ing;

8 “(G) provides support, including financial
9 assistance, to teacher and school leader can-
10 didates from the community who are planning
11 to teach in schools in the community, which
12 may include housing subsidies, stipends, and
13 tuition assistance;

14 “(H) sustains efforts to recruit and
15 incentivize more people to consider entering the
16 teaching profession, especially in high-need
17 fields and underserved schools; and

18 “(I) works in partnership with members of
19 the eligible partnership to provide academic,
20 counseling, and programmatic supports.

21 “(4) OPTIONAL PARTNER.—The term ‘optional
22 partner’ means any of the following entities:

23 “(A) The Governor of the State.

24 “(B) A State educational agency.

25 “(C) The State board of education.

1 “(D) The State agency for higher edu-
2 cation.

3 “(E) A business or a large employer in the
4 community.

5 “(F) A teacher organization.

6 “(G) A charter school (as defined in sec-
7 tion 4310).

8 “(H) A community or grassroots organiza-
9 tion.

10 “(I) A nonprofit entity.

11 “(5) RURAL HIGH-NEED LOCAL EDUCATIONAL
12 AGENCY.—The term ‘rural high-need local edu-
13 cational agency’ means a local educational agency—

14 “(A) located in a rural county, designated
15 with a locale code of 32, 33, 41, 42, or 43, as
16 determined by the Secretary;

17 “(B) that has persistent teacher vacancies
18 or a significant portion of teachers employed by
19 the agency who are not fully certified or li-
20 censed to teach or who are not certified or li-
21 censed to teach in the subject area they are as-
22 signed; and

23 “(C) for which not less than 23.5 percent
24 of the children served by the agency are from

1 low-income families, as described in section
 2 1124(c)(1)(A).

3 “(6) RURAL HIGH-NEED SCHOOL.—The term
 4 ‘rural high-need school’ means an elementary school
 5 or secondary school—

6 “(A) located in a rural county;

7 “(B) that has persistent teacher vacancies
 8 or not less than 10 percent of the teachers
 9 teaching at such school are not fully certified or
 10 licensed to teach or certified or licensed to
 11 teach in the subject area they are assigned; and

12 “(C) that is in the highest quartile of
 13 schools in a ranking of all schools served by the
 14 local educational agency serving such school,
 15 ranked in descending order by percentage of
 16 students from low-income families enrolled in
 17 such schools, as described in section
 18 1124(c)(1)(A).

19 “(7) TEACHING SKILLS.—The term ‘teaching
 20 skills’ means skills that enable a teacher to—

21 “(A) increase student learning, achieve-
 22 ment, and the ability to apply knowledge;

23 “(B) effectively convey, explain, and pro-
 24 vide opportunities for students to develop the
 25 skills aligned with the full depth and breadth of

1 the State challenging academic standards, in-
2 cluding the application of academic subject
3 matter;

4 “(C) effectively teach higher-order analyt-
5 ical, critical thinking, evaluation, problem-solv-
6 ing, and communication skills;

7 “(D) employ strategies grounded in the
8 disciplines of teaching and learning that—

9 “(i) are based on empirically based
10 practice and evidence-based research,
11 where applicable, related to teaching and
12 learning;

13 “(ii) are specific to academic subject
14 matter; and

15 “(iii) focus on the identification of
16 students’ specific learning needs, particu-
17 larly students with disabilities, students
18 who are English learners, students who are
19 gifted and talented, and students with low
20 literacy levels, and the tailoring of aca-
21 demic instruction to such needs;

22 “(E) design and conduct an ongoing as-
23 sessment of student learning, which may in-
24 clude the use of formative assessments, per-
25 formance-based assessments, project-based as-

1 assessments, or portfolio assessments, that meas-
 2 ure higher-order thinking skills (including appli-
 3 cation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) and
 4 use this information to inform and personalize
 5 instruction;

6 “(F) support the social, emotional, and
 7 academic achievement of all students, including
 8 effectively creating an inclusive classroom envi-
 9 ronment, including the ability to implement
 10 positive behavioral interventions, trauma-in-
 11 formed care, and other support strategies;

12 “(G) are culturally responsive and linguis-
 13 tically inclusive;

14 “(H) communicate and work with parents
 15 and involve parents in their children’s edu-
 16 cation; and

17 “(I) use age-appropriate and develop-
 18 mentally appropriate strategies and practices
 19 for students in early childhood education pro-
 20 grams and elementary schools and secondary
 21 schools.

22 “(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are—

23 “(1) to combat persistent rural teacher short-
 24 ages, especially in State-identified high-need fields,

1 by providing Federal support to States to develop
2 and run Grow Your Own Programs;

3 “(2) to recruit diverse and well-prepared indi-
4 viduals with the teaching skills and qualifications
5 identified as high need by the community into the
6 teaching profession; and

7 “(3) to increase student engagement in the
8 classroom and student academic outcomes.

9 “(c) GRANTS.—

10 “(1) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary
11 shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible
12 partnerships to enable the eligible partnerships to—

13 “(A) develop and run a Grow Your Own
14 Program to recruit diverse teacher candidates
15 from the community into the teaching profes-
16 sion and support them through high-quality
17 preparation to full teacher certification or licen-
18 sure;

19 “(B) provide support for identifying what
20 the unique needs of the community and school
21 district are in terms of high-need areas and
22 high-need fields;

23 “(C) support efforts to raise awareness
24 about the teaching profession and enact recruit-

1 ment drives in high-need communities and high-
2 need fields;

3 “(D) require candidates to complete all
4 State requirements to become fully certified;

5 “(E) provide academic and testing sup-
6 ports, including advising and financial assist-
7 ance, to candidates for admission and comple-
8 tion of education preparation programs as well
9 as State licensure assessments;

10 “(F) provide a year-long clinical experience
11 or teaching or school leadership residency with
12 a stipend to cover living expenses; and

13 “(G) provide opportunities for candidates
14 to practice and develop teaching skills and dis-
15 positions needed to be effective.

16 “(2) DURATION OF GRANT.—A grant awarded
17 under this section shall be for 5 years.

18 “(3) APPLICATION.—Each eligible partnership
19 desiring a grant under this section shall submit an
20 application to the Secretary accompanied by such in-
21 formation as the Secretary may require. Each such
22 application shall contain—

23 “(A) a needs assessment of the community
24 hosting the Grow Your Own Program, dem-
25 onstrating the existence of—

1 “(i) persistent teacher shortages;

2 “(ii) a high percentage of teachers not
3 fully certified or licensed to teach or not
4 certified or licensed to teach in the subject
5 area assigned; or

6 “(iii) a lack of teacher diversity;

7 “(B) a description of how the proposed
8 Grow Your Own Program fulfills the criteria
9 described in subsection (a)(3) and how each
10 component of the Program will contribute to
11 combating teacher shortages or lack of teacher
12 diversity;

13 “(C) a description of how the proposed
14 Grow Your Own Program will prepare prospec-
15 tive teachers to teach in a culturally diverse
16 classroom with pedagogy that reflects the expe-
17 riences of their students;

18 “(D) a description of how the proposed
19 Grow Your Own Program will prepare prospec-
20 tive teachers to support students with disabil-
21 ities and English learners;

22 “(E) a description of the roles of all part-
23 ners in the eligible partnership, including what
24 component of the proposed Grow Your Own
25 Program for which each member shall be re-

1 sponsible and how they would support the over-
2 all purpose of the Program;

3 “(F) a description of how the proposed
4 Grow Your Own Program will use grant funds
5 and any other available financial resources to
6 support the Program; and

7 “(G) a description of how the eligible part-
8 nership will collect metrics and accountability
9 measures for the proposed Grow Your Own
10 Program, including efforts to report the data
11 stipulated in the accountability section.

12 “(4) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this
13 section, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible
14 partnerships that include an eligible institution, as
15 described in section 371(a) of the Higher Education
16 Act of 1965.

17 “(5) GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAMS.—An eligible
18 partnership that receives a grant under this section
19 shall develop and run a Grow Your Own Program
20 that includes—

21 “(A) targeted recruitment efforts, includ-
22 ing promotion of the teaching profession—

23 “(i) at high schools, minority-serving
24 institutions, and community centers; and

1 “(ii) with paraprofessionals, instruc-
2 tional assistants, district employees not
3 certified to teach or lead (such as long-
4 term substitute teachers), after school and
5 summer program staff, parent school vol-
6 unteers, retired military personnel, and
7 other career changers with experience in
8 hard-to-staff areas who are not currently
9 certified to teach or lead, with a specific
10 focus on recruiting individuals who are re-
11 flective of the race, ethnicity, and native
12 language of the existing community’s stu-
13 dent population;

14 “(B) creation of curriculum and
15 coursework with principles of culturally respon-
16 sive education woven throughout, in addition to
17 a scaffolded sequence of coursework explicitly
18 teaching culturally responsive pedagogy, teach-
19 ing skills to support students with disabilities,
20 and teaching skills to support English learners;

21 “(C) at least one year of supervised clinical
22 experience, with a focus on partnering with
23 schools served by rural high-need local edu-
24 cational agencies;

1 “(D) mentorship and assistance with the
 2 teacher licensure and certification process, in-
 3 cluding test preparation;

4 “(E) high-quality induction programs;

5 “(F) direct financial assistance, including
 6 reduced tuition and in-kind financial support,
 7 such as childcare, especially for teachers being
 8 certified or licensed to teach in high-need fields
 9 or high-need communities;

10 “(G) plans to engage in outreach and col-
 11 laboration efforts with local schools, school dis-
 12 tricts, institutions of higher education, and
 13 community organizations; and

14 “(H) plans to use data to assess where
 15 teachers certified or licensed to teach with as-
 16 sistance from the Program are teaching and
 17 how that’s impacting teacher shortage numbers.

18 “(6) ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION.—An
 19 eligible partnership that receives a grant under this
 20 section shall, at the end of each grant year, submit
 21 to the Secretary a report on the Grow Your Own
 22 Program developed with the grant funds that in-
 23 cludes the following information:

24 “(A) Enrollment information,
 25 disaggregated by race and ethnicity and gender

1 except in such instances whereby the number of
2 people in a category is too small that
3 disaggregation would reveal personally identifi-
4 able information.

5 “(B) A description of the activities under-
6 taken by the eligible partnership over the year
7 using grant funding.

8 “(C) Graduation rates and completion
9 numbers, disaggregated by race and ethnicity
10 and gender except in such instances whereby
11 the number of people in a category is too small
12 that disaggregation would reveal personally
13 identifiable information.

14 “(D) The percentage and total number of
15 teacher candidates who have been certified or li-
16 censed to teach, disaggregated by subject and
17 area of certification or licensure, and by race
18 and ethnicity, and gender except in such in-
19 stances whereby the number of people in a cat-
20 egory is too small that disaggregation would re-
21 veal personally identifiable information.

22 “(E) The 3-year and 5-year teacher reten-
23 tion rate in the same school and local edu-
24 cational agency, within the profession, and in
25 the subjects for which the teachers were

1 trained, disaggregated by race and ethnicity,
2 and gender except in such instances whereby
3 the number of people in a category is too small
4 that disaggregation would reveal personally
5 identifiable information.

6 “(F) A survey of teachers starting in the
7 second year of the grant to assess and provide
8 feedback on the Program’s efforts and whether
9 there should be any modifications to address
10 the community’s needs.

11 “(G) A survey of community members,
12 such as parents, starting in the second year of
13 the grant to assess and provide feedback on the
14 Program’s efforts and whether there should be
15 any modifications to address the community’s
16 needs.”.

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