

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4377

To facilitate the safe re-opening of schools by conducting or supporting research on children’s infection with, and role in transmitting, SARS-CoV-2, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 30, 2020

Mr. BRAUN (for himself, Mr. CASEY, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. BROWN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To facilitate the safe re-opening of schools by conducting or supporting research on children’s infection with, and role in transmitting, SARS-CoV-2, and for other purposes.

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 “Protect our Children
5 from COVID-19 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The pandemic caused by the virus SARS-
2 CoV-2 has required a whole-of-society response
3 through mitigation efforts such as stay-at-home or-
4 ders and the physical closing of schools.

5 (2) Physical school closures can have substan-
6 tial negative effects on children’s education, mental
7 health, and social and emotional development.

8 (3) In general, physical school closures com-
9 pound inequities for many students, including stu-
10 dents in rural and low-income communities, where
11 students often lack access to computers and high-
12 speed internet, as well as exacerbate achievement
13 gaps for students from low-income families, students
14 with disabilities, English learners, students of color,
15 and students experiencing homelessness.

16 (4) To date, scientific evidence suggests chil-
17 dren have a lower probability of developing a serious
18 illness from COVID-19, the illness caused by
19 SARS-CoV-2, than adults. It remains unclear, how-
20 ever, what role children play in transmitting SARS-
21 CoV-2 to other children or adults.

22 (5) Pursuing research that analyzes and in-
23 creases understanding of the transmissibility of
24 SARS-CoV-2 in children will help families, edu-
25 cators, and elected leaders make evidence-based deci-

1 sions on safely physically re-opening schools and our
2 economy.

3 **SEC. 3. STUDY ON CHILDREN'S CONTRACTING AND TRANS-**
4 **MITTING OF SARS-COV-2.**

5 (a) STUDY.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than the date that
7 is 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
8 the Secretary of Health and Human Services (in this
9 section referred to as the “Secretary”), acting
10 through the Director of the National Institutes of
11 Health and in coordination with the Director of the
12 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and ex-
13 perts from outside of the Department of Health and
14 Human Services, such as the Department of Edu-
15 cation, health, occupational safety, and education
16 professional associations, and academia, as appro-
17 priate, shall conduct or support research on chil-
18 dren’s role in transmitting SARS-CoV-2.

19 (2) ISSUES TO BE STUDIED.—The research
20 under paragraph (1)—

21 (A) shall include research on—

22 (i) the transmissibility of SARS-CoV-
23 2 from child to child, child to adult, and
24 adult to child;

1 (ii) the vulnerability of children to se-
2 vere illness with COVID–19, including chil-
3 dren with underlying health conditions, de-
4 tailing any differences by age or grade
5 level; and

6 (iii) the vulnerability of children to
7 COVID–19 while being transported to and
8 from school, while playing sports (includ-
9 ing contact sports), and while engaging in
10 other extramural activities, detailing any
11 differences by age or grade level; and

12 (B) may include research on—

13 (i) the vulnerability of adults to
14 COVID–19, including adults with under-
15 lying health conditions, extended family
16 members living with children, (such as
17 grandparents), and vulnerabilities associ-
18 ated with certain activities, including—

19 (I) adults sending children from
20 the household back to school; and

21 (II) adults interacting with chil-
22 dren who may be asymptomatic but
23 infected with COVID–19, including
24 working in schools; and

1 (ii) the types of personal protective
2 equipment that should be provided to stu-
3 dents, educators, classified school employ-
4 ees, and other school staff employed in
5 school buildings.

6 (3) CONSIDERATIONS.—In conducting or sup-
7 porting the research under paragraph (1), the Sec-
8 retary shall—

9 (A) take into consideration the best avail-
10 able science, including as provided by the Na-
11 tional Academy of Sciences, the National Acad-
12 emy of Medicine, and other evidence-based or
13 peer-reviewed sources; and

14 (B) ensure that such research includes
15 consideration of children and adults who are
16 members of racial and ethnic minority groups,
17 as well as children and adults who are
18 immunocompromised or who may be at a great-
19 er risk from COVID–19, children and adults
20 with disabilities, children and families experi-
21 encing homelessness, and children who are eligi-
22 ble for a free or reduced price lunch under the
23 Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
24 (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.).

1 (b) REPORTING.—Not later than 6 months after the
2 date of enactment of this Act, and quarterly thereafter
3 through the end of the public health emergency declared
4 by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under
5 section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.
6 247d) on January 31, 2020, with respect to COVID–19,
7 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on chil-
8 dren’s role in transmitting SARS–CoV–2. Each report
9 shall include an overview of the research conducted or sup-
10 ported under subsection (a) and any relevant findings, and
11 the best practices disseminated to stakeholders under sub-
12 section (c).

13 (c) DISSEMINATION OF BEST PRACTICES.—Not later
14 than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
15 and quarterly thereafter through the end of the public
16 health emergency described in subsection (b), the Sec-
17 retary, acting through the Director of the Centers for Dis-
18 ease Control and Prevention, shall disseminate to stake-
19 holders best practices for protecting children and adults
20 in educational settings, including the types of personal
21 protective equipment that should be provided to students,
22 educators, classified school employees, and other school
23 staff employed in school buildings. The first set of best
24 practices disseminated pursuant to the preceding sentence
25 shall include any best practices for protecting children and

1 adults in educational settings identified through the re-
2 search conducted or supported under subsection (a), and
3 subsequent quarterly updates shall continue to reflect the
4 best available science.

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