

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 694

To require the Secretary of Energy to provide grants for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy improvements at public school facilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 10, 2021

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. MERKLEY, Ms. HIRONO, and Ms. STABENOW) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Energy to provide grants for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy improvements at public school facilities, 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 “Renew America’s
5 Schools Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANTS FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS**
2 **AND RENEWABLE ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS**
3 **AT PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES.**

4 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
6 ty” means a consortium of—

7 (A) 1 local educational agency; and

8 (B) 1 or more—

9 (i) schools;

10 (ii) nonprofit organizations;

11 (iii) for-profit organizations; or

12 (iv) community partners that have the
13 knowledge and capacity to partner and as-
14 sist with energy improvements.

15 (2) ENERGY IMPROVEMENT.—The term “en-
16 ergy improvement” means—

17 (A) any improvement, repair, or renovation
18 to a school that results in a direct reduction in
19 school energy costs, including improvements to
20 the envelope, air conditioning system, ventila-
21 tion system, heating system, domestic hot water
22 heating system, compressed air system, dis-
23 tribution system, lighting system, power system,
24 and controls of a building;

25 (B) any improvement, repair, or renovation
26 to, or installation in, a school that leads to an

1 improvement in teacher and student health, in-
2 cluding indoor air quality, daylighting, ventila-
3 tion, electrical lighting, windows, roofing (in-
4 cluding green roofs), outdoor gardens, and
5 acoustics;

6 (C) any improvement, repair, or renovation
7 to a school involving the installation of renew-
8 able energy technologies (such as wind power,
9 photovoltaics, solar thermal systems, geo-
10 thermal energy, hydrogen-fueled systems, bio-
11 mass-based systems, biofuels, anaerobic digest-
12 ers, and hydropower);

13 (D) the installation of zero-emissions vehi-
14 cle infrastructure on school grounds for—

15 (i) exclusive use of school buses,
16 school fleets, or students; or

17 (ii) the general public; and

18 (E) the purchase or lease of zero-emissions
19 vehicles to be used by a school, including school
20 buses, fleet vehicles, and other operational vehi-
21 cles.

22 (3) HIGH SCHOOL.—The term “high school”
23 has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of
24 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
25 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

1 (4) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term
2 “local educational agency” has the meaning given
3 the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-
4 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

5 (5) PARTNERING LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGEN-
6 CY.—The term “partnering local educational agen-
7 cy”, with respect to an eligible entity, means the
8 local educational agency participating in the consor-
9 tium of the eligible entity.

10 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
11 the Secretary of Energy.

12 (7) ZERO-EMISSIONS VEHICLE INFRASTRUC-
13 TURE.—The term “zero-emissions vehicle infrastruc-
14 ture” means infrastructure used to charge or fuel—

15 (A) a zero-emission vehicle (as defined in
16 section 88.102–94 of title 40, Code of Federal
17 Regulations (or successor regulation)); or

18 (B) a vehicle that produces zero exhaust
19 emissions of any criteria pollutant (or precursor
20 pollutant) or greenhouse gas under any possible
21 operational mode or condition.

22 (b) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall award competitive
23 grants to eligible entities to make energy improvements
24 in accordance with this section.

25 (c) APPLICATIONS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desiring a
2 grant under this section shall submit to the Sec-
3 retary an application at such time, in such manner,
4 and containing such information as the Secretary
5 may require.

6 (2) CONTENTS.—The application submitted
7 under paragraph (1) shall include each of the fol-
8 lowing:

9 (A) A needs assessment of the current con-
10 dition of the school and school facilities that
11 will receive the energy improvements.

12 (B) A draft work plan of the intended
13 achievements of the eligible entity at the school.

14 (C) A description of the energy improve-
15 ments that the eligible entity will carry out at
16 the school.

17 (D) A description of the capacity of the eli-
18 gible entity to provide services and comprehen-
19 sive support to make the energy improvements
20 referred to in subparagraph (C).

21 (E) An assessment of the expected needs
22 of the eligible entity for operation and mainte-
23 nance training funds, and a plan for use of
24 those funds, if applicable.

1 (F) An assessment of the expected energy
2 efficiency and safety benefits of the energy im-
3 provements.

4 (G) A cost estimate of the proposed energy
5 improvements.

6 (H) An identification of other resources
7 that are available to carry out the activities for
8 which grant funds are requested under this sec-
9 tion, including the availability of utility pro-
10 grams and public benefit funds.

11 (d) PRIORITY.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—In awarding grants under
13 this section, the Secretary shall give priority to an
14 eligible entity—

15 (A) that has renovation, repair, and im-
16 provement funding needs; and

17 (B)(i) that, as determined by the Sec-
18 retary, serves a high percentage of students, in-
19 cluding students in a high school in accordance
20 with paragraph (2), who are eligible for a free
21 or reduced price lunch under the Richard B.
22 Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
23 1751 et seq.); or

24 (ii) the partnering local educational agency
25 of which is designated with a school district lo-

1 cale code of 41, 42, or 43, as determined by the
2 National Center for Education Statistics in con-
3 sultation with the Bureau of the Census.

4 (2) HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.—In the case of
5 students in a high school, the percentage of students
6 eligible for a free or reduced price lunch described
7 in paragraph (1)(B)(i) shall be calculated using data
8 from the schools that feed into the high school.

9 (e) COMPETITIVE CRITERIA.—The competitive cri-
10 teria used by the Secretary to award grants under this
11 section shall include the following:

12 (1) The extent of the disparity between the fis-
13 cal capacity of the eligible entity to carry out energy
14 improvements at school facilities and the needs of
15 the partnering local educational agency for those en-
16 ergy improvements, including consideration of—

17 (A) the current and historic ability of the
18 partnering local educational agency to raise
19 funds for construction, renovation, moderniza-
20 tion, and major repair projects for schools;

21 (B) the ability of the partnering local edu-
22 cational agency to issue bonds or receive other
23 funds to support the current infrastructure
24 needs of the partnering local educational agency
25 for schools; and

1 (C) the bond rating of the partnering local
2 educational agency.

3 (2) The likelihood that the partnering local edu-
4 cational agency or eligible entity will maintain, in
5 good condition, any school and school facility that is
6 the subject of improvements.

7 (3) The potential energy efficiency and safety
8 benefits from the proposed energy improvements.

9 (f) USE OF GRANT AMOUNTS.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this
11 subsection, an eligible entity receiving a grant under
12 this section shall use the grant amounts only to
13 make the energy improvements described in the ap-
14 plication submitted by the eligible entity under sub-
15 section (c).

16 (2) OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE TRAIN-
17 ING.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this
18 section may use not more than 5 percent of the
19 grant amounts for operation and maintenance train-
20 ing for energy efficiency and renewable energy im-
21 provements, such as maintenance staff and teacher
22 training, education, and preventative maintenance
23 training.

24 (3) THIRD-PARTY INVESTIGATION AND ANAL-
25 YSIS.—An eligible entity receiving a grant under this

1 section may use a portion of the grant amounts for
2 a third-party investigation and analysis of the en-
3 ergy improvements carried out by the eligible entity,
4 such as energy audits and existing building commis-
5 sioning.

6 (4) CONTINUING EDUCATION.—An eligible enti-
7 ty receiving a grant under this section may use not
8 more than 3 percent of the grant amounts to develop
9 a continuing education curriculum relating to energy
10 improvements.

11 (g) COMPETITION IN CONTRACTING.—If an eligible
12 entity receiving a grant under this section uses grant
13 funds to carry out repair or renovation through a contract,
14 the eligible entity shall be required to ensure that the con-
15 tract process—

16 (1) through full and open competition, ensures
17 the maximum practicable number of qualified bid-
18 ders, including small, minority, and women-owned
19 businesses; and

20 (2) gives priority to businesses located in, or re-
21 sources common to, the State or geographical area
22 in which the repair or renovation under the contract
23 will be carried out.

1 (h) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary shall develop
2 and publish guidelines and best practices for activities car-
3 ried out under this section.

4 (i) REPORT BY ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—An eligible entity
5 receiving a grant under this section shall submit to the
6 Secretary, at such time as the Secretary may require, a
7 report describing—

8 (1) the use of the grant funds for energy im-
9 provements;

10 (2) the estimated cost savings realized by those
11 energy improvements;

12 (3) the results of any third-party investigation
13 and analysis conducted relating to those energy im-
14 provements;

15 (4) the use of any utility programs and public
16 benefit funds; and

17 (5) the use of performance tracking for energy
18 improvements, such as the Energy Star program es-
19 tablished under section 324A or the United States
20 Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and
21 Environmental Design (LEED) green building rat-
22 ing system for existing buildings.

23 (j) WAGE RATE REQUIREMENTS.—

24 (1) DAVIS-BACON.—Any laborer or mechanic
25 employed by any contractor or subcontractor in the

1 performance of work on any energy improvements
2 funded by a grant under this section shall be paid
3 wages at rates not less than those prevailing on
4 similar construction in the locality as determined by
5 the Secretary of Labor under subchapter IV of chap-
6 ter 31 of title 40, United States Code (commonly re-
7 ferred to as the “Davis-Bacon Act”).

8 (2) AUTHORITY.—With respect to the labor
9 standards specified in paragraph (1), the Secretary
10 of Labor shall have the authority and functions set
11 forth in Reorganization Plan Numbered 14 of 1950
12 (64 Stat. 1267; 5 U.S.C. App.) and section 3145 of
13 title 40, United States Code.

14 (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
15 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
16 \$100,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025.

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