

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3398

To improve the English language and literacy skills of English language learners and their families, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 20, 2021

Mr. GRIJALVA introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To improve the English language and literacy skills of English language learners and their families, 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 “Families Learning and
5 Understanding English Together Act of 2021” or the
6 “FLUENT Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 The Congress finds the following:

9 (1) The Census Bureau’s American Community
10 Survey of 2018 estimated 21.9 percent of United

1 States households speak a language other than
2 English at home.

3 (2) In many recently immigrated families, care-
4 givers speak little to no English, can possess low lit-
5 eracy skills in their primary language due to limited
6 or interrupted education, and frequently struggle to
7 assist their children’s English and primary language
8 and literacy development.

9 (3) The United States is a Nation of immi-
10 grants, and even today, according to the Census Bu-
11 reau’s American Community Survey of 2018, more
12 than 44,000,000 individuals who live in the United
13 States were born outside the country.

14 **SEC. 3. PURPOSE.**

15 The purpose of this Act is to improve the educational,
16 social, and economic advancement of families with English
17 language learners who have unmet literacy needs by ex-
18 panding and enhancing family literacy activities and serv-
19 ices for such families.

20 **SEC. 4. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM.**

21 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From funds made
22 available pursuant to section 9, and after reserving funds
23 under section 9(b), the Secretary may award grants to
24 family literacy providers to provide, directly or through a
25 contract with another provider, family literacy services de-

1 signed for English language learners and their families.
2 Each grant under this Act shall be for a period of 1 year
3 and may be renewed for a total of 5 additional years.

4 (b) APPLICATION.—Family literacy providers who de-
5 sire to receive a grant under this Act shall submit an ap-
6 plication at such time, containing such information, and
7 in such manner as the Secretary may require. Such appli-
8 cation shall include the following:

9 (1) An assurance that services provided with
10 funds under this Act shall be provided to the hard-
11 est-to-reach populations, prioritizing English lan-
12 guage learner populations with the greatest eco-
13 nomic, educational, and social need.

14 (2) A description of the services that will be
15 provided with funds under this Act, including the
16 manner in which the services will be research-based
17 literacy instruction for children who are English
18 learners and caregivers who are English language
19 learners.

20 (3) A description of the outcome measures, con-
21 sistent with section 6, that are based on research
22 and will be employed by the family literacy provider
23 to measure the effectiveness of services provided
24 with funds under this Act.

1 (4) An assurance that, in providing family lit-
2 eracy services through the grant, the family literacy
3 provider will collaborate with one or more of the fol-
4 lowing:

5 (A) A State or Tribal local educational
6 agency.

7 (B) A public elementary school.

8 (C) A public secondary school.

9 (D) A nonprofit entity (such as a commu-
10 nity-based organization, library, community col-
11 lege, or early childhood provider).

12 (5) A requirement that any preservice educators
13 or paraprofessionals who facilitate family or adult
14 literacy activities be trained and under the direct su-
15 pervision of a highly qualified family literacy pro-
16 vider trained in research-based methods of early lan-
17 guage and literacy promotion.

18 (c) GRANT AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant under
19 this Act for a fiscal year shall not be less than \$150,000
20 or more than \$1,000,000.

21 (d) SERVICES REQUIREMENTS.—Family literacy
22 services under this Act shall be provided in sufficient in-
23 tensity in terms of hours, and shall be of sufficient dura-
24 tion, to make sustainable changes in a family and shall
25 integrate all of the following activities:

1 (1) Interactive literacy activities between care-
2 givers and their children that includes online and
3 digital learning resources.

4 (2) Education that helps caregivers learn how
5 to advocate for their children and support their chil-
6 dren’s primary and English language and literacy
7 development and educational success.

8 (3) Adult literacy education which includes dig-
9 ital and systems literacy that improves conceptual
10 knowledge and reasoning skills.

11 (4) An age-appropriate education plan, devel-
12 oped in partnership with caregivers, to prepare chil-
13 dren for success in school, career, and civic life.

14 (e) SPECIAL RULE.—Family literacy services under
15 this Act may be provided to a family only if—

16 (1) each caregiver in the family has attained 16
17 years of age; and

18 (2) the family has at least one child who has
19 not yet attained 8 years of age.

20 **SEC. 5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING.**

21 (a) ACTIVITIES BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary, act-
22 ing through the Assistant Secretary for Elementary and
23 Secondary Education, shall, through grants or contracts
24 as described in subsection (b), provide technical assistance
25 and training to family literacy providers receiving a grant

1 under section 4 for the purposes described in subsection
2 (c).

3 (b) ACTIVITIES BY NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make
5 grants to, or enter into contracts with, at least 2 eli-
6 gible national organizations to provide technical as-
7 sistance and training to family literacy providers re-
8 ceiving a grant under section 4 for the purposes de-
9 scribed in subsection (c).

10 (2) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “el-
11 igible national organization” means a national orga-
12 nization with expertise in providing family literacy
13 services to English language learner populations.

14 (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of technical assistance
15 and training provided under this section are the following:

16 (1) Assisting family literacy providers receiving
17 a grant under section 4 to improve the quality of
18 their family literacy services.

19 (2) Enabling such family literacy providers that
20 demonstrate the effective provision of family literacy
21 services, based on improved outcomes for children
22 and their caregivers, to provide technical assistance
23 and training to government agencies and to family
24 literacy providers that work in collaboration with

1 such agencies to improve the quality of their family
2 literacy services.

3 (3) Assisting such providers in the implementa-
4 tion of literacy curriculum and training activities, in-
5 cluding curriculum and training activities that sup-
6 port building on a child's primary language.

7 (d) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90 days
8 after the end of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall sub-
9 mit to the Committee on Education and Labor of the
10 House of Representatives and the Committee on Health,
11 Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate a report
12 on the technical assistance and training provided pursuant
13 to subsections (a) and (b). Each such report shall describe
14 the actions taken by the Secretary to ensure that such
15 technical assistance and training is of high quality and
16 is responsive to the needs of grantees under this Act.

17 **SEC. 6. OUTCOME MEASURES.**

18 The Secretary shall require each family literacy pro-
19 vider receiving a grant under this Act to meet culturally
20 appropriate and competent outcome measures described in
21 the provider's application under section 4, including out-
22 come measures with respect to—

23 (1) acquisition of the English language, includ-
24 ing improvement in academic achievement and aca-
25 demic language fluency and comprehension;

1 (2) literacy skills and building of the primary
2 language;

3 (3) improved caregiving and life skills, such as
4 communication and problem-solving skills;

5 (4) the improved ability of caregivers who are
6 English language learners to effectively communicate
7 and partner with school personnel at the preschool,
8 elementary, or secondary school their children at-
9 tend;

10 (5) improvement in the developmental skills and
11 ability of the children to direct, regulate, and assess
12 their own learning;

13 (6) increased caregiver participation in their
14 children's education, interactive literacy activities,
15 and home environments to support children's learn-
16 ing and growth; and

17 (7) improved general, cross-cutting abilities
18 such as applied academic skills, critical thinking
19 skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, per-
20 sonal qualities, and skills in resource management,
21 information use, systems thinking, and technology
22 use.

1 **SEC. 7. EVALUATION.**

2 The Secretary shall conduct an annual evaluation of
3 the grant program under this Act. Such evaluation shall
4 be used by the Secretary—

5 (1) for program improvement;

6 (2) to further define the program’s goals and
7 objectives; and

8 (3) to determine program effectiveness.

9 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

10 For purposes of this Act:

11 (1) **ADULT EDUCATION PROVIDER.**—The term
12 “adult education provider” has the meaning given
13 the term “eligible provider” in section 203 of the
14 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
15 U.S.C. 3272).

16 (2) **APPLICATION OF ESEA TERMS.**—The terms
17 “elementary school”, “English learner”, “local edu-
18 cational agency”, and “secondary school” have the
19 meanings given such terms in section 8101 of the
20 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
21 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

22 (3) **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER; FAMILY LIT-**
23 **ERACY ACTIVITIES.**—The terms “English language
24 learner” and “family literacy activities” have the
25 meanings given the terms in section 203 of the

1 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
2 U.S.C. 3272).

3 (4) FAMILY LITERACY PROVIDER.—The term
4 “family literacy provider” means an entity that—

5 (A) except in a case in which the Secretary
6 waives the requirement of this subparagraph
7 with respect to an entity, is located in a geo-
8 graphic area containing at least one public ele-
9 mentary school or secondary school with either
10 a majority enrollment or recent increase in en-
11 rollment of children who have been identified as
12 English learners; and

13 (B) is one of the following:

14 (i) A grantee under the Head Start
15 Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), or any other
16 Federal or State early childhood program.

17 (ii) An adult education provider.

18 (iii) A local educational agency.

19 (iv) A public or private nonprofit
20 agency.

21 (v) Another entity that has the dem-
22 onstrated ability to provide family literacy
23 services to English language learning
24 adults and families.

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

3 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
5 priated to carry out this Act \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal
6 years 2022 through 2026.

7 (b) RESERVATIONS.—From funds made available
8 pursuant to subsection (a) for a fiscal year, the Secretary
9 shall reserve—

10 (1) not more than 2 percent of such funds for
11 conducting the annual evaluation required by section
12 7; and

13 (2) \$5,000,000 for technical assistance and
14 training under section 5.

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