

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5500

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an initiative to support peer learning relating to a wide range of agriculture conservation activities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

Mr. MOLINARO (for himself and Ms. SALINAS) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an initiative to support peer learning relating to a wide range of agriculture conservation activities, 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 “Peer Learning for Ag-
5 riculture Conservation Education Act of 2023” or the
6 “PLACE Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. PEER LEARNING FOR AGRICULTURE CONSERVA-**
2 **TION EDUCATION.**

3 Section 1271C of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16
4 U.S.C. 3871c) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing:

6 “(e) PEER LEARNING INITIATIVE.—

7 “(1) DEFINITION OF PEER LEARNING.—In this
8 subsection, the term ‘peer learning’ means an edu-
9 cational experience that includes—

10 “(A) farmer, rancher, or forester led infor-
11 mation sharing, education, or training activities
12 that support agricultural producers or foresters;
13 or

14 “(B) the provision of farmer, rancher, or
15 forester led technical assistance to agricultural
16 producers or foresters.

17 “(2) ESTABLISHMENT OF INITIATIVE.—Not
18 later than 1 year after enactment, the Secretary
19 shall establish an initiative to support projects that
20 provide to agricultural producers peer learning op-
21 portunities relating to a wide range of agriculture
22 conservation activities, such as—

23 “(A) activities or management systems, as
24 determined by the Secretary, that directly con-
25 tribute to improving soil health; and

1 “(B) any other regional priority natural re-
2 source concerns, as determined by the Sec-
3 retary.

4 “(3) GRANTS.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the
6 initiative established under paragraph (2), the
7 Secretary shall enter into not fewer than 5
8 grant agreements each fiscal year to support
9 peer learning projects in accordance with that
10 paragraph.

11 “(B) AGREEMENTS.—

12 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary
13 may enter into a grant agreement under
14 subparagraph (A) with 1 or more eligible
15 partners that are engaged in providing
16 peer learning to agricultural producers.

17 “(ii) PROJECTS.—A grant agreement
18 under subparagraph (A) may support any
19 of the following:

20 “(I) Projects within or sponsored
21 by a State.

22 “(II) Multistate projects.

23 “(III) Projects in a critical con-
24 servation area designated under sec-
25 tion 1271F.

1 “(C) APPLICATIONS.—

2 “(i) IN GENERAL.—An organization
3 described in subparagraph (B)(i) desiring
4 to enter into a grant agreement under sub-
5 paragraph (A) shall submit to the Sec-
6 retary an application at such time, in such
7 manner, and containing such information
8 as the Secretary may require.

9 “(ii) MULTIPLE APPLICANTS.—An ap-
10 plication under clause (i) may be submitted
11 jointly by multiple organizations described
12 in subparagraph (B)(i).

13 “(4) DUTIES OF THE ELIGIBLE PARTNER.—

14 “(A) Entities that enter into an agreement
15 with the Secretary under paragraph (3)(B)
16 shall use funding for purposes related to coordi-
17 nating peer learning initiatives, such as—

18 “(i) convening of stakeholders to
19 achieve the goals of the contractual part-
20 nership with NRCS through the Program;

21 “(ii) farmer outreach and education;

22 “(iii) forester outreach and education;

23 “(iv) convening of the scientific com-
24 munity for the purposes of coordinating
25 scientific research methodologies and data

1 sets related to priority resource concerns
2 identified in the agreement;

3 “(v) coordination of municipal and
4 State policies with on-farm practices;

5 “(vi) facilitating trainings; and

6 “(vii) other activities as determined by
7 the Secretary that facilitate peer learning
8 oriented around priority resource concerns
9 identified in the agreement.

10 “(B) Submit to the Secretary, in addition
11 to any information that the Secretary requires
12 to prepare the report under section 3871e(b) of
13 this title, an annual report that describes the
14 status of the project, including a description
15 of—

16 “(i) the use of the funds awarded
17 under paragraph (3);

18 “(ii) any subcontracts awarded;

19 “(iii) the producers receiving funding
20 through the funding agreement under
21 paragraph (3);

22 “(iv)(I) the progress made by the
23 project in addressing each natural resource
24 concern defined in the funding agreement

1 under paragraph (3), including in a quan-
2 tified form to the extent practicable; and

3 “(II) as appropriate, other outcomes
4 of the project; and

5 “(v) any other reporting data the Sec-
6 retary determines are necessary to ensure
7 compliance with the program rules.

8 “(5) WAIVER.—With respect to a project fund-
9 ed under the initiative established under paragraph
10 (2), the Secretary may waive any requirement under
11 the program that limits the percentage of program
12 funding that may be used for technical assistance, or
13 requires a minimum percentage of program funding
14 to be used for financial assistance, such that up to
15 100 percent of the funding provided for the project
16 may be used for technical assistance, if the grant
17 agreement entered into under paragraph (3)(B) with
18 respect to that project includes a plan to promote
19 the availability of covered programs to agricultural
20 producers.”.

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