

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 8688

To establish a grant program for certain institutions of higher education to plan and implement projects for economic and community development in economically distressed communities, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 9, 2022

Mr. COSTA (for himself and Mr. WESTERMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To establish a grant program for certain institutions of higher education to plan and implement projects for economic and community development in economically distressed communities, 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. DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish  
5 a program to award grants to institutions of higher edu-  
6 cation designated under subsection (b) to plan and imple-

1 ment eligible projects for economic and community devel-  
2 opment in economically distressed communities.

3 (b) DESIGNATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
4 EDUCATION.—

5 (1) LIST OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDU-  
6 CATION.—The Secretary shall develop a list of every  
7 institution of higher education that the Secretary de-  
8 termines is located in a distressed community, in ac-  
9 cordance with the criteria described in paragraph  
10 (2).

11 (2) DISTRESSED COMMUNITY CRITERIA.—The  
12 Secretary shall determine that an institution of high-  
13 er education is located in a distressed community if  
14 one of the following circumstances applies to such  
15 institution:

16 (A) In the case of an institution of higher  
17 education that is located in a metropolitan or a  
18 micropolitan statistical area, as defined by the  
19 Office of Management and Budget, and in a  
20 State in which the median family income is  
21 higher than the national median family income,  
22 the institution of higher education is located in  
23 a zip code in which the median family income  
24 is at least 25 percent lower than the median  
25 family income for such State.

1           (B) In the case of an institution of higher  
2 education that is located in a metropolitan or a  
3 micropolitan statistical area, as defined by the  
4 Office of Management and Budget, and in a  
5 State in which the median family income is  
6 lower than the national median family income,  
7 the institution of higher education is located in  
8 a zip code in which the median family income  
9 is at least 25 percent lower than the national  
10 median family income.

11           (C) In the case of an institution of higher  
12 education that is not located in a metropolitan  
13 or micropolitan statistical area and is located in  
14 a State in which the median family income is  
15 higher than the national median family income,  
16 the institution of higher education is located in  
17 a county in which the median family income is  
18 at least 25 percent lower than the median fam-  
19 ily income for such State.

20           (D) In the case of an institution of higher  
21 education that is not located in a metropolitan  
22 or micropolitan statistical area and is located in  
23 a State in which the median family income is  
24 lower than the national median family income,  
25 the institution of higher education is located in

1 a county in which the median family income is  
2 at least 25 percent lower than the national me-  
3 dian family income.

4 (3) DESIGNATION.—

5 (A) NOTIFICATION TO INSTITUTIONS OF  
6 HIGHER EDUCATION.—Upon development of the  
7 list of institutions of higher education located in  
8 a distressed community under paragraph (1),  
9 the Secretary shall notify each institution of  
10 higher education that is included in such list  
11 that such institution may be designated under  
12 this paragraph to receive a planning grant and  
13 an implementation grant under this section.

14 (B) NOTIFICATION TO SECRETARY.—An  
15 institution of higher education that receives a  
16 notification from the Secretary under subpara-  
17 graph (A) that intends to receive a planning  
18 grant and an implementation grant under this  
19 section shall submit to the Secretary a notifica-  
20 tion of such intent in such form and at such  
21 time as the Secretary determines appropriate.

22 (C) GRANT ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary  
23 shall designate each institution of higher edu-  
24 cation that submits a notification under sub-  
25 paragraph (B) as eligible to receive a planning

1 grant and an implementation grant under this  
2 section.

3 (c) PLANNING GRANTS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide  
5 a grant to each institution of higher education des-  
6 ignated under subsection (b) for such institution to  
7 develop an implementation plan describing—

8 (A) the eligible projects that such institu-  
9 tion intends to carry out with an implementa-  
10 tion grant under subsection (d); and

11 (B) how such projects will support eco-  
12 nomic and community revitalization in the com-  
13 munity in which such institution is located.

14 (2) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—A recipient of a plan-  
16 ning grant under this subsection shall complete  
17 the implementation plan required under para-  
18 graph (1) not later than 2 years after the date  
19 on which the Secretary provides a planning  
20 grant to such recipient.

21 (B) APPROVAL.—Upon completion of an  
22 implementation plan with a planning grant pro-  
23 vided under this subsection, the Secretary shall  
24 review such plan for approval.

25 (3) GRANT AMOUNTS.—

1 (A) GRANT TERM.—The Secretary may  
2 distribute funds for a grant provided under this  
3 subsection for a period of not more than 2  
4 years.

5 (B) TOTAL GRANT AMOUNTS.—Each grant  
6 awarded under this subsection shall be in an  
7 amount that does not exceed \$100,000 for each  
8 year of the grant term.

9 (C) ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS.—

10 (i) APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL  
11 GRANT FUNDS.—Not later than 1 year  
12 after a grant funds are first awarded  
13 under subparagraph (A), a grant recipient  
14 may submit to the Secretary an application  
15 to receive additional funds to complete the  
16 implementation plan required under para-  
17 graph (1).

18 (ii) DEADLINE TO RECEIVE ADDI-  
19 TIONAL GRANT FUNDS.—Not later than 90  
20 days after a grant recipient submits an ap-  
21 plication for additional grant funds under  
22 clause (i), the Secretary shall determine  
23 whether to award additional grant funds to  
24 such recipient and shall distribute such ad-  
25 ditional grant funds to such recipient.

1 (D) FORMULA.—The Secretary shall estab-  
2 lish a formula by which the Secretary shall dis-  
3 tribute funds for each grant under this sub-  
4 section in accordance with this paragraph.

5 (d) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Upon approval of an imple-  
7 mentation plan under subsection (c)(2), the Sec-  
8 retary shall provide a grant to the institution of  
9 higher education to carry out eligible projects de-  
10 scribed in such plan.

11 (2) GRANT TERM.—The term of a grant pro-  
12 vided under this subsection shall be 5 years.

13 (3) GRANT AMOUNTS.—The Secretary shall es-  
14 tablish a formula by which the Secretary shall dis-  
15 tribute funds for each grant under this subsection in  
16 accordance with the following requirements:

17 (A) The Secretary shall provide each re-  
18 cipient of a grant under this subsection with a  
19 grant in an amount that is not less than  
20 \$25,000,000 and not more than \$50,000,000.

21 (B) The Secretary shall distribute funds  
22 for each grant under this subsection at least  
23 once during each year of the grant term.

24 (4) USE OF FUNDS.—A recipient of a grant  
25 under this subsection may only use such grant to

1 carry out an eligible project in the distressed com-  
2 munity in which such recipient is located, as deter-  
3 mined by the Secretary under subsection (b)(2).

4 (5) REPORT REQUIRED.—At least once each  
5 year during the term of a grant provided under this  
6 subsection, a recipient of such grant shall submit to  
7 the Secretary a report describing the activities for  
8 which such grant was used during such year.

9 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) ELIGIBLE PROJECT.—The term “eligible  
11 project” means a project that will spur economic de-  
12 velopment in the community in which such project is  
13 carried out, including a project to—

14 (A) renovate, construct, or maintain build-  
15 ings that will benefit and be accessible to the  
16 community, including—

17 (i) commercial buildings located on  
18 the campus of the institution of higher  
19 education carrying out the project;

20 (ii) housing for students, faculty,  
21 staff, or members of the community;

22 (iii) cultural institutions such as mu-  
23 seums, theaters, and arts centers; and

24 (iv) facilities such as laboratories or  
25 libraries;

1           (B) establish programs, hosted by the in-  
2           stitution of higher education carrying out the  
3           project, that provide seed money to early-stage  
4           companies for small business development;

5           (C) develop and fund apprenticeships,  
6           hosted by the institution of higher education  
7           carrying out the project, in local industries to  
8           decrease unemployment in the community;

9           (D) build and maintain municipal  
10          broadband networks and related infrastructure  
11          for the institution of higher education that is  
12          carrying out the project and the community;

13          (E) build and maintain health clinics ac-  
14          cessible to the public on or near the campus of  
15          the institution of higher education that is car-  
16          rying out the project;

17          (F) establish programs at local health clin-  
18          ics to educate, recruit, and train members of  
19          the community to become healthcare profes-  
20          sionals;

21          (G) establish partnerships between the in-  
22          stitution of higher education carrying out the  
23          project and local school districts to provide—

24                  (i) graduate student teaching support;

1 (ii) administrative support to such  
2 school districts; and

3 (iii) access to facilities of such institu-  
4 tion of higher education to local elementary  
5 and secondary schools; and

6 (H) fund research on the campus of the in-  
7 stitution of higher education carrying out the  
8 project that is relevant to the economic needs of  
9 the community.

10 (2) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “institution  
12 of higher education” means an institution of  
13 higher education (as defined in section 101(a)  
14 of the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C.  
15 1001(a))) that has a physical campus and that  
16 offers not more than 25 percent of courses  
17 through distance education (as defined in sec-  
18 tion 103(7) of the Higher Education Act of  
19 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1003)), including an institu-  
20 tion of higher education established under the  
21 Morrill Act of 1890 (7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.).

22 (B) EXCLUSION.—The term “institution of  
23 higher education” does not include an institu-  
24 tion of higher education that—

1 (i) is an institution of higher edu-  
2 cation established under the Morrill Act of  
3 1862 (7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.);

4 (ii) has very high research activity  
5 status, as designated by the Carnegie Clas-  
6 sification of Institutions of Higher Edu-  
7 cation; or

8 (iii) is a service academy.

9 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
10 the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the As-  
11 sistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Devel-  
12 opment.

13 (4) SERVICE ACADEMY.—The term “service  
14 academy” means the following:

15 (A) The United States Military Academy.

16 (B) The United States Naval Academy.

17 (C) The United States Air Force Academy.

18 (D) The United States Coast Guard Acad-  
19 emy.

20 (E) The United States Merchant Marine  
21 Academy.

22 (F) Any college or university designated by  
23 the Secretary of Defense as a military college.

24 (G) A State or regional maritime academy  
25 or college sponsored by a State or group of

- 1 States and assisted under chapter 515 of title
- 2 46, United States Code.

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