118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2167

To enable schools serving grades 6 through 12 that are located in rural areas or that serve Native American students to remodel or build new facilities to provide STEM classrooms and laboratories and support high-speed internet, to establish a program to support the modernization, renovation, or repair of career and technical education facilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 22, 2023

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

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A BILL

To enable schools serving grades 6 through 12 that are located in rural areas or that serve Native American students to remodel or build new facilities to provide STEM classrooms and laboratories and support high-speed internet, to establish a program to support the modernization, renovation, or repair of career and technical education facilities, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Inspiring New STEM Professionals by Investing in Renovation of Education Spaces Act'' or the ''INSPIRES Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Technological advancement has increased the types of jobs available now and for the foreseeable future. Over the next 10 years, employers will be looking to fill an estimated 821,300 openings for the top 10 occupations in the collective fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (referred to in this section as ''STEM''). STEM jobs pay well; STEM workers earn an average of $22,000 per year more than non-STEM workers at every education level. However, projections suggest that the United States won't have enough skilled workers to fill STEM jobs.

(2) STEM skills and knowledge are now required in a wide range of occupations, including many that are not traditionally considered to be science or engineering-related, such as sustainable agriculture, management of natural resources, and health care.

(3) Because of the growing use of STEM skills across all job sectors, the distinction between a

''rural'' as compared to an ''urban'' job is blurring. For instance, renewable energy development and bio-based product manufacturing employ workers in a variety of areas of the United States. Known as the ''new collar'' economy, the phenomenal growth in job opportunities for those who are prepared will also support the growth of communities: places to raise families and invest in the future.

(4) Good STEM experiences in middle school will lead to positive attitudes toward and expectations of STEM experiences in high school. In the middle grades, students begin to demonstrate formal logical operations (critical thinking). Further, middle school students have been shown to be highly susceptible to developing opinions about their competence and interest in STEM learning.

(5) Providing students with additional time in after school and summer STEM programs allows students opportunities to engage in hands-on learning that sparks interest in STEM fields and careers. Students who engage in well-designed laboratory experiences develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and gain exposure to reactions, materials, and equipment in a lab setting. Sustained investments in hands-on experiences help inspire students

to further their education and prepare them for high-technology careers by fostering skills sought by potential employers. Hands-on experiences significantly advance learning at all levels of science education when appropriately designed and guided by qualified educators, in a safe learning environment that is student-centered and curriculum-driven. The classroom should contain enough resources, space, and storage to permit long-term multidisciplinary projects, individual and small-group learning, and inquiry and project-based learning.

(6) The United States has unique trust and treaty obligations to provide comprehensive quality educational opportunities to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians and support Native-serving schools. However, many Native American students do not have equitable access to STEM educational opportunities. Surveys suggest that fewer than half of all American Indian and Alaska Native public high school students have access to a full range of mathematics and science courses. Additionally, schools serving Native students frequently dismissed and devalued traditional STEM knowledge, discouraging Native student engagement in STEM areas. As a result, Native Americans receive

only 0.6 percent of STEM undergraduate degrees and account for only 0.3 percent of the United States engineering workforce.

(7) To meet the challenge of educating youth to fulfill the demand for STEM workers, public schools in the United States must be equipped to educate all youth in STEM skills, especially youth who are underserved or socially disadvantaged.

(8) The median age of United States schools is 65 years. Nearly 50 percent of school buildings in the United States need significant repairs or upgrades, including clean and safe classrooms and laboratory spaces, up-to-date technology, and broadband. Moreover, the condition of school facilities has a measurable effect on student achievement.

(9) For all of these reasons, the future workforce of the United States needs safe, clean, well-equipped school facilities where all students can reach their full potential and learn the knowledge and skills that place them on a secure pathway to enhance the capacity of the United States to compete globally.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION.—The term ''career and technical education'' has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2302).

(2) COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The term ''community college'' means a public institution of higher education at which the predominant degree awarded to students is an associate's degree, including a 2-year Tribal College or University as defined in section 316 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c) and a public 2-year State institution of higher education.

(3) EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY.—The term ''educational service agency'' has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

(4) ELIGIBLE AGENCY.—The term ''eligible agency'' means a local educational agency, a consortium of local educational agencies, or an educational service agency.

(5) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ''eligible entity'' means—

(A) an eligible institution;

(B) a community college;

(C) a local educational agency or consortium of local educational agencies;

(D) an educational service agency;

(E) a tribal educational agency;

(F) an Indian Tribe;

(G) a Tribal organization; or

(H) another entity determined appropriate by the Secretary.

(6) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.—The term ''eligible institution'' means any of the following:

(A) An Alaska Native-serving institution or a Native Hawaiian-serving institution (as such terms are defined in section 317 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059d)), a Native American-serving, nontribal institution (as defined in section 319 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1059f)), or an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution (as defined in section 320 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1059g)).

(B) A Tribal College or University, as defined in section 316(b) of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)).

(C) An 1890 Institution, as defined in section 2 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7601).

(D) A 1994 Institution, as defined in section 2 of such Act (7 U.S.C. 7601).

(E) A Hispanic-serving agricultural college or university, as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103).

(F) A minority-serving institution, which shall be defined as an eligible institution under section 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

(7) ELIGIBLE SCHOOL.—The term ''eligible school'' means—

(A) a public school that—

(i) serves students in any of grades 6 through 12; and

(ii)(I) is located—

(aa) in a rural area, as defined in section 25.503 of title 7, Code of Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation;

(bb) on or near trust land;

(cc) on or near a substantially underserved trust area, as defined in section 306F(a) of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 936f(a)); or

(dd) in an eligible community, as defined in section 1456 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j–16); or

(II) is determined by an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization to serve Native American students; or

(B) a Bureau-funded school, as defined in section 1141 of the Education Amendments of 1978 (25 U.S.C. 2021).

(8) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ''Indian Tribe'' has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

(9) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The term ''institution of higher education'' has the meaning given the term in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

(10) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term ''local educational agency'' has the meaning given

the term in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801 et seq.).

(11) NATIVE AMERICAN.—The term ''Native American'' has the meaning given the term in section 102 of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3002).

(12) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP.—The term ''public-private partnership'' means a partnership—

(A) between a State or an eligible agency and a private entity (which may be a nonprofit organization, business, or other nongovernmental entity); and

(B) through which the private entity will provide some or all of the required match under section 4(e).

(13) QUALIFIED STEM EDUCATION FACILITY PROJECT.—The term ''qualified STEM education facility project'' means—

(A) the modernization, renovation, or repair of facilities to provide STEM classrooms or laboratories (including instrumentation and major laboratory equipment) and updates re-

lated to student and faculty health and safety, which may include—

(i) improving the energy efficiency of a facility;

(ii) improving the cost-effectiveness of a facility in delivering quality education;

(iii) improving student, faculty, and staff health and safety at a facility;

(iv) improving, installing, or upgrading educational technology infrastructure;

(v) retrofitting an existing building for career and technical education purposes; or

(vi) a one-time repair of serviceable equipment at a facility, or replacement of equipment at a facility that is at the end of its serviceable lifespan, that will be used to further educational outcomes;

(B) building new facilities to provide STEM classrooms or laboratories; or

(C) supporting the establishment and maintenance of high-speed internet for a STEM classroom or laboratory.

(14) QUALIFIED CTE FACILITY PROJECT.—The term ''qualified CTE facility project''—

(A) means the modernization, renovation, or repair of a facility that will be used to improve the quality and availability of STEM or career and technical education instruction to students, and that may include—

(i) improving the energy efficiency of the facility;

(ii) improving the cost-effectiveness of the facility in delivering quality education;

(iii) improving student, faculty, and staff health and safety at the facility;

(iv) improving, installing, or upgrading educational technology infrastructure;

(v) retrofitting an existing building for career and technical education purposes; or

(vi) a one-time repair of serviceable equipment at the facility, or replacement of equipment at the facility that is at the end of its serviceable lifespan, that will be used to further educational outcomes; and

(B) does not include new construction or the payment of routine maintenance costs.

(15) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Education.

(16) STEM.—The term ''STEM''—

(A) means the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and related fields (including computer science); and

(B) includes culturally based or traditional knowledge fields in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.

(17) TRIBAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term ''tribal educational agency'' has the meaning given the term in section 6132(b)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3)).

(18) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''tribal organization'' has the meaning given the term in section 658P of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858n).

(19) TRUST LAND.—The term ''trust land'' has the meaning given the term in section 3765 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 4. STEM EDUCATION FACILITIES GRANTS.

(a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to improve STEM education facilities by awarding grants, through allotments under subsection (b), to States to enable the States to award subgrants to eligible agencies or tribal educational agencies to carry out

qualified STEM education facility projects at eligible schools.

(b) ALLOTMENTS AND USE OF FUNDS FOR STATES.—

(1) ALLOTMENTS.—From amounts appropriated to carry out this section for each fiscal year and not reserved under subsection (g), the Secretary shall allot to each State that has an application approved under this section an amount that bears the same relationship as the number of schools in the State that are rural schools designated with a locale code of 41, 42, or 43, as determined by the Secretary, bears to the number of all such schools in the United States and on trust lands for that fiscal year.

(2) USE OF FUNDS.—

(A) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR QUALIFIED STEM EDUCATION FACILITY PROJECTS AT SCHOOLS SERVING NATIVE AMERICANS.—From amounts provided to a State under paragraph (1), each State with 1 or more eligible schools described in item (bb) or (cc) of subclause (I), or subclause (II), of section 3(7)(A)(ii) shall reserve not less than 10 percent of the State's allotment for qualified STEM education facility projects at such eligible schools.

(B) USE OF FUNDS FOR QUALIFIED STEM EDUCATION FACILITY PROJECTS.—A State receiving an allotment under paragraph (1) shall, use the amount of such allotment remaining after any reservation required under subparagraph (A) to award subgrants to eligible agencies to carry out qualified STEM education facility projects at eligible schools.

(c) APPLICATION.—

(1) GRANT APPLICATION FOR STATES.—A State that desires to receive an allotment under this section shall submit an application to the Secretary at such a time, in such a manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. Such information shall include, at a minimum—

(A) a description of the process that the State will use in selecting and awarding subgrants to eligible agencies;

(B) an assurance that such process will meet the requirements described in paragraph (2);

(C) an assurance that in awarding subgrants to eligible agencies, the State will give priority to eligible agencies that are part of a public-private partnership; and

(D) if the State has formed a public-private partnership, a description of that partnership, including how the private entity partner will contribute to the required match under subsection (e)(1).

(2) SUBGRANT APPLICATION.—A State that receives an allotment under this section shall require an eligible agency that desires a subgrant to submit an application that contains, at a minimum, the following information:

(A) A detailed description of each qualified STEM education facility project that the eligible agency will carry out with subgrant funds.

(B) A description of the need for each such qualified STEM education facility project.

(C) A description of how the eligible agency will ensure that each qualified STEM education facility project will be adequately maintained.

(D) An identification of the eligible schools that will benefit from the qualified STEM education facility projects supported under the subgrant.

(E) A description of how the facilities or internet supported by a qualified STEM edu-

cation facility project will be used to provide educational services in STEM during the school day and the summer, and in after school programs.

(F) If the eligible agency has formed a public-private partnership, a description of that partnership, including how the private entity partner will contribute to the required match under subsection (e)(2).

(d) ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS.—The Secretary shall encourage, but not require, States receiving allotments under paragraph (1) to ensure that the modernization, renovation, repair, or building supported by the qualified STEM education facility project meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building rating standards, Energy Star standards, Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) criteria, Green Building Initiative environmental design and rating standards (Green Globes), the Living Building Challenge certification standards, or equivalent standards adopted by entities with jurisdiction over or related to the States.

(e) MATCHING FUNDS.—

(1) STATES.—A State that receives a grant under this section shall provide, from non-Federal sources, an amount equal to 25 percent of the

amount of the State's allotment under subsection (b)(1) to carry out activities supported by the grant.

(2) ELIGIBLE AGENCIES.—An eligible agency that receives a subgrant under subsection (b)(2)(B) shall provide, from non-Federal sources, an amount equal to 10 percent of the amount of the subgrant to carry out activities supported by the subgrant.

(3) TYPE OF MATCH.—A matching requirement under this subsection may be provided in cash or in-kind.

(4) WAIVER AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may waive the requirement under this subsection for a State if the Secretary determines that the State will be unable to satisfy the matching requirement.

(f) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds made available under this section shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal and State funds available to carry out the activities supported under this section.

(g) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary may reserve not more than 3 percent of funds appropriated to carry out this section for the administrative costs of this section and to provide technical assistance to States and eligible agencies concerning best practices in carrying out qualified STEM education facility projects.

(h) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 1 year after funds are appropriated to carry out this section, and every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the effect of the qualified STEM education facility projects supported under this section on improving academic achievement.

SEC. 5. CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT.

(a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From amounts appropriated to carry out this section, the Secretary shall carry out a program to improve career and technical education facilities by—

(1) awarding grants to eligible entities to enable the eligible entities to carry out qualified CTE facility projects;

(2) guaranteeing loans made to eligible entities for qualified CTE facility projects; or

(3) making payments of interest on bonds, loans, or other financial instruments (other than a refinancing) that are issued to eligible entities for qualified CTE facility projects.

(b) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires to receive a grant, loan guarantee, or payment of interest under this section shall submit an application to the Sec-

retary at such a time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. The application shall include—

(1) a detailed description of the qualified CTE facility project;

(2) in the case of a qualified CTE facility project described in section 3(14)(A)(vi), a description of the educational outcomes to be furthered by the one-time repair of serviceable equipment or replacement of equipment;

(3) an indication as to whether the eligible entity prefers to receive a grant, loan guarantee, or payment of interest;

(4) a description of the need for the qualified CTE facility project;

(5) a description of how the eligible entity will ensure that the qualified CTE facility project will be adequately maintained;

(6) a description of how the qualified CTE facility project will improve instruction and educational outcomes at the facility, including any opportunities to integrate project activities within the curriculum of a school or institution;

(7) a description of how the facility supported by the qualified CTE facility project will be used for

providing educational services in STEM, or career and technical education;

(8) if the qualified CTE facility project will seek sustainability certifications, then a description of how the modernization, renovation, or repair supported by the qualified CTE facility project meets Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building rating standards, Energy Star standards, Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) criteria, Green Building Initiative environmental design and rating standards (Green Globes), the Living Building Challenge certification standards, or equivalent standards adopted by entities with jurisdiction over or related to the eligible entity;

(9) a description of the fiscal capacity of the eligible entity;

(10) the percentage of students enrolled in the eligible entity or a school or institution served by the eligible entity to be served by the qualified CTE facility project who are from low-income families;

(11) in the case of a qualified CTE facility project at a facility that is used by students in a secondary school (as such term is defined in section 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801)), the secondary school graduation rates;

(12) in the case of an eligible entity that has formed a partnership with a private entity (which may include a nonprofit organization, business, or other nongovernmental entity), a description of that partnership, including how the private entity partner will contribute to the qualified CTE facility project; and

(13) such additional information and assurances as the Secretary may require.

(c) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants, guaranteeing loans, or making payments under subsection (a), the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities that have a partnership described in subsection (b)(12).

(d) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds made available under this section shall be used to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal and State funds available to carry out the activities supported under this section.

(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary may reserve a total of not more than 3 percent of funds appropriated to carry out this section—

(1) for the administrative costs of this section; and

(2) to provide technical assistance to eligible entities concerning best practices in school facility renovation, repair, and modernization.

(f) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 1 year after funds are appropriated to carry out this section, and every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the effect of the qualified CTE facility projects supported under this section on improving academic achievement.

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated—

(1) to carry out section 4, not less than $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each succeeding fiscal year; and

(2) to carry out section 5, not less than $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each succeeding fiscal year.

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