

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2402

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to establish a career pathways grant program.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 19, 2023

Ms. HASSAN (for herself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. KAINE, and Ms. COLLINS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to establish a career pathways grant program.

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 “Gateway to Careers
5 Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. CAREER PATHWAYS GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle D of title I of the Work-
8 force Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3221 et
9 seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 173. CAREER PATHWAYS GRANT PROGRAM.**

2 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

3 “(1) CAREER PATHWAY PARTNERSHIP APPLI-
4 CANT.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘career
6 pathway partnership applicant’ means a part-
7 nership that includes—

8 “(i) a workforce development partner;

9 and

10 “(ii) an education partner.

11 “(B) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PART-
12 NER.—A workforce development partner de-
13 scribed in subparagraph (A) means one or more
14 of the following:

15 “(i) A local board.

16 “(ii) An industry association or other
17 representative of multiple employers in the
18 target industry, including an eligible indus-
19 try or sector partnership.

20 “(iii) A community-based organization
21 with experience in providing employment,
22 education, or support services relevant to
23 the career pathway and student popu-
24 lations receiving services under the grant
25 under this section.

1 “(C) EDUCATION PARTNER.—An education
2 partner described in subparagraph (A) means
3 one or more of the following:

4 “(i) An institution of higher edu-
5 cation, as defined in section 101 of the
6 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
7 1001), or a postsecondary vocational insti-
8 tution, as defined in section 102(e) of such
9 Act (20 U.S.C. 1002(c)).

10 “(ii) An area career and technical
11 education school that provides education at
12 the postsecondary level.

13 “(iii) A local educational agency, as
14 defined under section 8101 of the Elemen-
15 tary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
16 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

17 “(iv) An eligible provider, as defined
18 under section 203.

19 “(2) ELIGIBLE INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PART-
20 NERSHIP.—The term ‘eligible industry or sector
21 partnership’ means—

22 “(A) an industry or sector partnership,
23 which shall, at a minimum, include multiple
24 representatives described in each of clauses (i)

1 through (iii) of paragraph (26)(A) of section 3;
2 or

3 “(B) a partnership, of multiple entities de-
4 scribed in section 3(26) and a State board or
5 local board, that is in the process of estab-
6 lishing an industry or sector partnership.

7 “(3) MEASURABLE SKILL GAINS.—The term
8 ‘measurable skill gains’ has the meaning given the
9 term in section 361.155(a)(1)(v) of title 34, Code of
10 Federal Regulations (or successor regulations).

11 “(4) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
12 the Secretary of Labor.

13 “(b) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—The Secretary, in
14 consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall estab-
15 lish a career pathway grant program, through which the
16 Secretary shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to
17 State workforce agencies to enable the State workforce
18 agencies to award subgrants to career pathway partner-
19 ship applicants to carry out the activities described in sub-
20 section (e).

21 “(c) APPLICATION FOR GRANTS.—A State workforce
22 agency that desires to receive a grant under this section
23 shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time
24 and in such manner as the Secretary may require.

1 “(d) GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY.—In awarding grants
2 under this section, the Secretary shall ensure an equitable
3 geographic distribution of such grants, including to rural
4 areas and other regions that have traditionally been un-
5 derserved by regional economic development and industry
6 or sector partnership activities.

7 “(e) SUBGRANTS TO CAREER PATHWAY PARTNER-
8 SHIP APPLICANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A State workforce agency
10 that receives a grant under this section shall use the
11 grant funds—

12 “(A) to award subgrants to career pathway
13 partnership applicants; and

14 “(B) to provide technical assistance in ap-
15 plying for subgrants under this section to eligi-
16 ble career pathway partnership applicants.

17 “(2) APPLICATIONS.—A career pathway part-
18 nership applicant desiring to receive a subgrant
19 under this section shall submit an application to the
20 State workforce agency, at such time and in such
21 manner as the State workforce agency may require.
22 Such application shall include the following informa-
23 tion:

24 “(A) A description of the career pathway
25 program that will be supported under the

1 subgrant, including a description of the in-de-
2 mand industry sectors or occupations that will
3 be targeted and the recognized postsecondary
4 credentials to be awarded.

5 “(B) A description of how the career path-
6 way program supported under the subgrant is
7 aligned and coordinated with other employment,
8 education, and support services offered in the
9 geographic area served under the subgrant, in-
10 cluding those provided under this Act, the
11 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001
12 et seq.), the Carl D. Perkins Career and Tech-
13 nical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301
14 et seq.), the supplemental nutrition assistance
15 program established under the Food and Nutri-
16 tion Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), and
17 the program of block grants to States for tem-
18 porary assistance for needy families under part
19 A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42
20 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).

21 “(C) A description of the populations that
22 will be served under the subgrant, including an
23 analysis of any barriers to employment, includ-
24 ing in postsecondary education, access, and
25 completion, that such populations face, and an

1 analysis of how the services to be provided
2 under the subgrant will address those barriers.

3 “(D) A description of the activities and
4 services to be provided under this subgrant,
5 consistent with paragraph (4).

6 “(E) A description of the performance out-
7 comes that the career pathway partnership ap-
8 plicant plans to achieve, including a description
9 of how the career pathway partnership appli-
10 cant will evaluate and measure student progress
11 and measurable skill gains along a career path-
12 way.

13 “(F) Such other information as the State
14 workforce agency may require.

15 “(3) PRIORITY.—In awarding subgrants under
16 this subsection, the State workforce agency shall—

17 “(A) give priority to career pathway part-
18 nership applicants that include as a partner in
19 the partnership a public institution of higher
20 education at which the highest degree that is
21 predominantly awarded to students is an associ-
22 ate’s degree, including 2-year Tribal Colleges or
23 Universities under section 316 of the Higher
24 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c) and

1 public 2-year State institutions of higher edu-
2 cation;

3 “(B) give priority to career pathway part-
4 nership applicants that seek to serve individuals
5 with a barrier to employment or individuals
6 with a barrier to postsecondary education; and

7 “(C) give priority to career pathway part-
8 nership applicants that will use subgrant funds
9 for an activity, strategy, or intervention that—

10 “(i) demonstrates a statistically sig-
11 nificant effect on improving student out-
12 comes or other relevant outcomes based
13 on—

14 “(I) strong evidence from not
15 less than 1 well-designed and well-im-
16 plemented experimental study;

17 “(II) moderate evidence from not
18 less than 1 well-designed and well-im-
19 plemented quasi-experimental study;
20 or

21 “(III) promising evidence from
22 not less than 1 well-designed and well-
23 implemented correlational study with
24 statistical controls for selection bias;

1 “(ii) demonstrates a rationale based
2 on high quality research finding or positive
3 evaluation that such activity, strategy, or
4 intervention is likely to improve student
5 outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and

6 “(iii) includes ongoing efforts to ex-
7 amine the effects of such activity, strategy,
8 or intervention.

9 “(4) USE OF FUNDS.—

10 “(A) DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING
11 CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAMS.—A career path-
12 way partnership applicant that receives a
13 subgrant under this subsection shall use the
14 subgrant funds to carry out activities that sup-
15 port the development and implementation of a
16 career pathway program, which shall include
17 one or more of the following:

18 “(i) The planning and implementation
19 of agreements between the partners of the
20 career pathway partnership applicant to
21 support seamless transitions between ele-
22 ments of the career pathway program of-
23 fered by different partners, as appropriate.

24 “(ii) The development and expansion
25 of new or existing programs at the career

1 pathway partnership applicant that utilize
2 integrated education and training strate-
3 gies, and support multiple entry and exit
4 points for working learners, which may in-
5 clude—

6 “(I) dual-enrollment approaches
7 for secondary students or discon-
8 nected youth seeking to participate in
9 a career pathway program; and

10 “(II) strategies that help working
11 students and other nontraditional and
12 adult student populations access skills
13 and recognized credentials.

14 “(iii) The provision of evidence-based
15 professional development for faculty and
16 other staff at the career pathway partner-
17 ship applicant.

18 “(iv) The acquisition of equipment
19 necessary to support the delivery of career
20 pathway programs supported through the
21 subgrant.

22 “(v) Any other evidence-based activi-
23 ties identified by the career pathway part-
24 nership applicant as necessary to support
25 the development or implementation of ca-

1 reer pathway programs, as long as such
2 activities are clearly outlined in the
3 subgrant application.

4 “(B) STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES.—In
5 addition to the activities described in subpara-
6 graph (A), a career pathway partnership appli-
7 cant receiving a subgrant under this subsection
8 shall use subgrant funds to provide student
9 support services to students engaged in career
10 pathway programs, which may include—

11 “(i) the provision of direct support
12 services such as childcare, transportation,
13 mental health and substance use disorder
14 treatment, assistance in obtaining health
15 insurance coverage, and assistance in ac-
16 cessing the supplemental nutrition assist-
17 ance program established under the Food
18 and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011
19 et seq.), the special supplemental nutrition
20 program for women, infants, and children
21 established by section 17 of the Child Nu-
22 trition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786),
23 housing, and other benefits, as appro-
24 priate;

1 “(ii) offering career pathway naviga-
2 tion and case management services, includ-
3 ing providing information and outreach to
4 target populations to encourage individuals
5 to take part in programs and service offer-
6 ings; and

7 “(iii) the provision of emergency
8 grants to help students facing financial
9 hardships that may impact enrollment or
10 completion of an element of a career path-
11 way program.

12 “(5) REPORTS.—

13 “(A) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—Each
14 State workforce agency receiving a grant under
15 this section shall submit a report to the Sec-
16 retary, on an annual basis, describing—

17 “(i) the activities provided under the
18 subgrants awarded under this section, in-
19 cluding activities carried out directly by ca-
20 reer pathway partnership applicants;

21 “(ii) the students receiving services
22 under the subgrants, disaggregated by age,
23 race or ethnicity, gender, barriers to em-
24 ployment, and income;

1 “(iii) the quality of jobs in which stu-
2 dents receiving services through a career
3 pathway program carried out through sub-
4 grants under this section are employed
5 after exit from the program; and

6 “(iv) indicators of performance for
7 students receiving services through a ca-
8 reer pathway program carried out through
9 subgrants under this section, disaggregated
10 by participant type as described in clause
11 (ii), including, at a minimum—

12 “(I) the percentage of program
13 participants who are in unsubsidized
14 employment prior to enrollment in the
15 career pathway program;

16 “(II) the percentage of program
17 participants who are in unsubsidized
18 employment during the second quarter
19 after exit from the program;

20 “(III) the percentage of program
21 participants who are in unsubsidized
22 employment during the fourth quarter
23 after exit from the program;

24 “(IV) the median earnings of
25 program participants who are in un-

1 subsidized employment prior to enroll-
2 ment in the career pathway program;

3 “(V) the median earnings of pro-
4 gram participants who are in unsub-
5 sidized employment during the second
6 quarter after exit from the program;

7 “(VI) the percentage of program
8 participants who obtain a recognized
9 postsecondary credential, or a sec-
10 ondary school diploma or its recog-
11 nized equivalent, during participation
12 in or within 1 year after exit from the
13 program;

14 “(VII) the percentage of program
15 participants who, during a program
16 year, are in an education or training
17 program that leads to a recognized
18 postsecondary credential or employ-
19 ment and who are achieving measur-
20 able skill gains toward such a creden-
21 tial or employment; and

22 “(VIII) the percentage of pro-
23 gram participants receiving support
24 services, disaggregated by type of
25 service.

1 “(B) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Sec-
2 retary shall submit a report to Congress, on a
3 biennial basis, on the information submitted to
4 the Secretary under subparagraph (A).

5 “(f) DURATION OF AWARDS.—Each grant and
6 subgrant awarded under this section shall be for a period
7 of not more than 4 years. A career pathway partnership
8 applicant may apply for subsequent subgrants after the
9 completion of a subgrant period.

10 “(g) EVALUATION AND ADMINISTRATION.—The Sec-
11 retary shall reserve—

12 “(1) not less than 1 percent and not more than
13 3 percent of the funds made available under sub-
14 section (h) for each fiscal year to—

15 “(A) conduct a rigorous, independent eval-
16 uation of the activities funded under this sec-
17 tion; and

18 “(B) disseminate and promote the utiliza-
19 tion of evidence-based practices related to ca-
20 reer pathway programs for postsecondary stu-
21 dents; and

22 “(2) not more than 3 percent of the funds
23 made available under subsection (h) for each fiscal
24 year for administrative costs associated in carrying
25 out this section.

1 “(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the activi-
3 ties described in this section, such sums as may be nec-
4 essary for fiscal year 2024 and for each subsequent fiscal
5 year thereafter.”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in
7 section 1(b) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
8 Act is amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-
9 tion 172, the following:

“Sec. 173. Career pathways grant program.”.

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