

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To direct the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to support the recruitment and retention of paraprofessionals in public elementary schools, secondary schools, and preschool programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to support the recruitment and retention of paraprofessionals in public elementary schools, secondary schools, and preschool programs, 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 “Preparing And Retain-
5 ing All (PARA) Educators Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANTS TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND**
2 **RETAIN PARAPROFESSIONALS IN SCHOOLS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Education shall
4 carry out a program under which the Secretary makes al-
5 lotments to State educational agencies to assist States,
6 local educational agencies, and educational service agen-
7 cies in recruiting and retaining paraprofessionals in public
8 elementary schools, secondary schools, and preschool pro-
9 grams.

10 (b) STATE-BY-STATE ALLOCATION.—Each State
11 educational agency that has an application approved by
12 the Secretary under subsection (e)(1) shall be allocated
13 an amount that bears the same relationship to the amount
14 appropriated to carry out this Act for each fiscal year as
15 the amount received by all local educational agencies in
16 the State under part A of title I of the Elementary and
17 Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et
18 seq.) for the previous fiscal year bears to the total amount
19 received under such part for such fiscal year by all local
20 educational agencies in every State.

21 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—

22 (1) STATE RESERVATION.—A State educational
23 agency that receives an allotment under subsection
24 (b) may reserve not more than 5 percent of the al-
25 lotment for administrative activities relating to the
26 grant program under paragraph (2) and to carry out

1 statewide activities to support the recruitment and
2 retention of paraprofessionals in public elementary
3 schools, secondary schools, and preschool programs
4 in the State.

5 (2) SUBGRANTS TO ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—From
6 amounts received under subsection (b) and not re-
7 served under paragraph (1), a State educational
8 agency shall make subgrants to eligible entities, on
9 a competitive basis, to support the recruitment and
10 retention of paraprofessionals in public elementary
11 schools, secondary schools, and preschool programs,
12 which may include activities such as—

13 (A) establishing paraprofessional leader in-
14 duction and mentoring programs that are evi-
15 dence-based (to the extent a State determines
16 that such evidence is reasonably available) and
17 designed to—

18 (i) improve classroom instruction and
19 student learning and achievement, includ-
20 ing through improving school leadership
21 programs; and

22 (ii) increase the retention of para-
23 professionals;

24 (B) developing and implementing high-
25 quality professional development programs to

1 recruit and retain paraprofessionals in the ele-
2 mentary schools, secondary schools, and pre-
3 school programs served by eligible entities;

4 (C) providing paraprofessionals with the
5 skills, credentials, or certifications needed to
6 educate all students, such as—

7 (i) a special education certificate;

8 (ii) an English learner certificate;

9 (iii) an advanced paraeducator certifi-
10 cation to support specialized instruction;

11 and

12 (iv) a certification in teaching; and

13 (D) increasing wages for paraprofessionals
14 or providing bonus pay incentives to retain and
15 recruit paraprofessionals.

16 (d) PRIORITY.—

17 (1) IN GENERAL.—In making subgrants to eli-
18 gible entities under subsection (c)(2), a State edu-
19 cational agency shall give priority to entities—

20 (A) that serve greater numbers or percent-
21 ages of children from low-income families;

22 (B) in which all schools served by the enti-
23 ty are designated with a locale code of 41, 42,
24 or 43, as determined by the Secretary of Edu-
25 cation; or

1 (C) in which all schools served by the enti-
2 ty—

3 (i) receive special assistance payments
4 under section 11(a)(1)(F) of the Richard
5 B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42
6 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)); and

7 (ii) have an identified student percent-
8 age (as such term is defined in section
9 245.9(f)(1)(iii) of title 7, Code of Federal
10 Regulations (or any successor regulations))
11 of not less than the applicable threshold
12 under section 11(a)(1)(F)(viii) of the Rich-
13 ard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
14 (42 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)(viii)).

15 (2) LOW-INCOME FAMILY.—For purposes of
16 paragraph (1)(A), the term “low-income family”
17 means a family—

18 (A) in which a child is eligible for the
19 school lunch program under the Richard B.
20 Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
21 1751 et seq.);

22 (B) in which the child is—

23 (i) enrolled in a school that receives
24 special assistance payments under section
25 11(a)(1)(F) of the of the Richard B. Rus-

1 sell National School Lunch Act (42
2 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)); and

3 (ii) is an identified student (as defined
4 in section 11(a)(1)(F)(i) of that Act);

5 (C) receiving assistance under the program
6 of block grants to States for temporary assist-
7 ance for needy families established under part
8 A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42
9 U.S.C. 601 et seq.); or

10 (D) in which the child is eligible to receive
11 medical assistance under the Medicaid program
12 under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42
13 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

14 (e) APPLICATIONS.—

15 (1) STATE APPLICATIONS.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive
17 a grant under subsection (a), a State edu-
18 cational agency shall submit an application to
19 the Secretary at such time, in such manner,
20 and containing such information as the Sec-
21 retary may require.

22 (B) REQUIRED ASSURANCES.—A State
23 educational agency submitting an application
24 under subparagraph (A) shall include in such
25 application an assurance that—

1 (i) in making subgrants under sub-
2 section (c)(2), the State will give priority
3 to eligible entities described in subsection
4 (d); and

5 (ii) the State educational agency will
6 comply with the reporting requirements
7 under subsection (f).

8 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY APPLICATIONS.—To be
9 eligible to receive a subgrant from a State edu-
10 cational agency under subsection (c)(2), an eligible
11 entity shall submit an application to the State edu-
12 cational agency at such time, in such manner, and
13 containing such information as the State educational
14 agency may require.

15 (f) IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION.—On an an-
16 nual basis, in each fiscal year for which a State edu-
17 cational agency receives a grant under this section, such
18 agency shall prepare and submit to the Secretary of Edu-
19 cation a report that includes—

20 (1) updated average paraprofessional pay base-
21 lines for that fiscal year, disaggregated by the state-
22 wide average and the average within the schools
23 served by each eligible entity in the State;

24 (2) a description of how the State and eligible
25 entities in the State increased the average wages for

1 paraprofessional baselines in a manner consistent
2 with the statewide annual goals for the cor-
3 responding fiscal year;

4 (3) updated data on the number of paraprofes-
5 sionals employed by eligible entities in the State—

6 (A) who earn less than the average wage
7 for paraprofessionals in the State; and

8 (B) who earn less than the average wage
9 for paraprofessionals employed by the eligible
10 entity concerned;

11 (4) identification of any eligible entity that used
12 a subgrant under subsection (c)(2) to increase the
13 number of paraprofessionals employed in the schools
14 and preschools served by such entity;

15 (5) a description of the actions the State edu-
16 cational agency will take in the next fiscal year to
17 support eligible entities experiencing a shortage of
18 paraprofessionals; and

19 (6) a description of any professional develop-
20 ment activities used by eligible entities to recruit and
21 retain paraprofessionals.

22 (g) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION FOR COLLECTIVE
23 BARGAINING.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
25 nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or

1 otherwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures
2 afforded to school employees or employees of an eli-
3 gible entity under Federal, State, or local laws (in-
4 cluding applicable regulations or court orders) or
5 under the terms of collective bargaining agreements,
6 memoranda of understanding, or other agreements
7 between such employers and their employees.

8 (2) COMPLIANCE.—Paragraph (1) shall not be
9 construed to exempt a State, eligible entity, or
10 school from complying with this section or from ne-
11 gotiating in compliance with State labor laws to
12 comply with this section.

13 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
14 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act
15 such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years
16 2026 through 2030.

17 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

18 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
19 ty” means—

20 (A) an educational service agency that
21 serves a high-need school or a consortium of
22 high-need schools; or

23 (B) a local educational agency.

24 (2) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “educational
25 service agency”, “elementary school”, “English

1 learner”, “evidence-based”, “local educational agen-
2 cy”, “secondary school”, and “State educational
3 agency” have the meanings given those terms in sec-
4 tion 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

6 (3) HIGH-NEED SCHOOL.—The term “high-need
7 school” has the meaning given that term in section
8 2243(f)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
9 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6673(f)(2)).

10 (4) PARAPROFESSIONAL.—The term “para-
11 professional” has the meaning given that term in
12 section 3201 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
13 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7011).

14 (5) PRESCHOOL PROGRAM.—The term “pre-
15 school program” means a program that—

16 (A) provides for the care, development, and
17 education of infants, toddlers, or young children
18 age 5 and under;

19 (B) meets any applicable State or local
20 government licensing, certification, approval,
21 and registration requirements; and

22 (C) is operated by a public or private
23 school that is supported, sponsored, supervised,
24 or administered by an eligible entity.