

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.

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

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.

