

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3211

To direct the Secretary of Labor to carry out a competitive grant program to support community colleges and career and technical education centers in developing immersive technology education and training programs for workforce development, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 11, 2023

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER (for herself, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. SOTO, and Mr. GARBARINO) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Labor to carry out a competitive grant program to support community colleges and career and technical education centers in developing immersive technology education and training programs for workforce development, 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 “Immersive Technology
5 for the American Workforce Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Rural communities have unique workforce
2 considerations and challenges.

3 (2) Almost 25 percent of Americans live in
4 rural communities, and while urban areas have expe-
5 rienced job and population growth, rural commu-
6 nities face static or declining populations and job de-
7 cline.

8 (3) Rural communities were hit harder and re-
9 covered more slowly than urban centers during the
10 2007–2008 recession and have experienced more
11 economic depression and decline in college enroll-
12 ment due to the COVID–19 pandemic.

13 (4) Rural communities historically have lower
14 rates of postsecondary education, which is a barrier
15 to traditional employment in industries like agri-
16 culture and manufacturing.

17 (5) The World Economic Forum’s Future of
18 Jobs report estimates that by 2025 over half of all
19 employees will require “significant” reskilling cre-
20 ating a significant demand for workforce develop-
21 ment and training programs.

22 (6) Immersive technologies are proving effective
23 in helping rural communities tackle these challenges.

24 (7) Technologically mediated training can in-
25 clude extended reality (XR) tools (such as aug-

1 mented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality, and
2 high-tech simulations), which are increasingly valued
3 as resources to train workers in industries ranging
4 from manufacturing to health care, agriculture to
5 construction, and clean energy to public safety.

6 (8) Use of immersive technology permits on-site
7 training and continued education, promotes effi-
8 ciency, aids recruiting as well as retention, improves
9 communication and collaboration, and increases
10 safety.

11 (9) Immersive technologies allow workers to
12 train directly under the supervision and tutelage of
13 more experienced experts who are located outside of
14 the local community.

15 (10) These technologies help workers remain
16 well equipped for the demands of the modern econ-
17 omy. As the need for reskilling increases, so will the
18 need for technologies which support American work-
19 ers rather than replace them.

20 (11) Building in accessibility features in
21 immersive technology for usability by individuals
22 with disabilities, including disabled veterans, allows
23 inclusive immersive technology to benefit more work-
24 ers.

1 (12) Community colleges, area career and tech-
2 nical education centers, and other training providers
3 are uniquely positioned to support rural communities
4 in skills development and workforce training.

5 (13) People without a postsecondary credential
6 are 4 times more likely to have a job that can be
7 lost to automation than those who have one, increas-
8 ing their need to learn new skills in order to remain
9 competitive and employable.

10 (14) Community colleges provide education at a
11 lower cost, with most graduates incurring no student
12 debt.

13 (15) In addition to providing lower cost work-
14 force development training and skills education ap-
15 plicable across a range of roles and occupations,
16 community colleges serve as large regional employers
17 and critical community hubs.

18 (16) Offering grants to community colleges and
19 area career and technical education centers in rural
20 areas to develop and provide immersive technology
21 training programs will help rural communities or
22 significantly serve rural areas in the short term and
23 position them for success in the longer term.

24 (17) Despite their proven value, community col-
25 leges and area career and technical education

1 schools bear significant funding limitations and
2 shortages.

3 (18) Providing immersive technology training
4 programs through community colleges can help rural
5 communities retain local talent, whether by pro-
6 viding qualification for new local jobs or for remote
7 employment opportunities with companies
8 headquartered in urban centers that are struggling
9 to fill jobs.

10 (19) Ensuring the accessibility of immersive
11 technology training tools can expand opportunities
12 for people with disabilities to learn and work from
13 wherever they reside. Given that some people with
14 disabilities choose remote options to meet their ac-
15 cess needs, it is critical to make immersive tech-
16 nology training tools accessible to everyone.

17 (20) Immersive technology training partnership
18 with community colleges and area career and tech-
19 nical education schools also complements recent
20 Federal funding for broadband connection and phys-
21 ical infrastructure, the two other biggest hurdles fac-
22 ing rural students and workers seeking reskilling or
23 upskilling.

1 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY AND EDU-**
2 **CATION WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS**
3 **AND CAREER PATHWAYS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
5 date of enactment of this section, from the amounts appro-
6 priated to carry out this section, the Secretary of Labor
7 shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-
8 ties to carry out immersive technology education and
9 workforce training programs or career pathways that use
10 immersive technology.

11 (b) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity receiving a
12 grant under this section shall use such grant for at least
13 one of the following:

14 (1) To develop and implement or improve an
15 immersive technology education and workforce train-
16 ing program, or a related policy, program, or other
17 activity that uses immersive technology that—

18 (A) facilitates the transfer of academic
19 credits (including for courses in the same field
20 or program of study) between covered commu-
21 nity colleges and other institutions of higher
22 education, including other covered community
23 colleges; and

24 (B) develops or enhances supportive serv-
25 ices for students enrolled in such a program or
26 activity.

1 (2) The creation or alignment of a career path-
2 way that provides a sequence of education and occu-
3 pational training that leads to a recognized postsec-
4 ondary credential, including a program or activity
5 that—

6 (A)(i) includes integrated education and
7 training that uses immersive technology; and

8 (ii) is designed to increase the provision of
9 workforce training for students (including indi-
10 viduals who are members of the Armed Forces
11 and veterans) in order to facilitate the entry of
12 such students into in-demand industry sectors
13 or occupations; or

14 (B) enables the training of instructors in
15 the use of immersive technology in education
16 and workforce training programs.

17 (3)(A) To develop and implement, in consulta-
18 tion with one or more of the entities described in
19 subparagraph (B), an immersive technology edu-
20 cation and training program, which—

21 (i) is accessible to individuals with a dis-
22 ability, disabled veterans, and individuals with a
23 barrier to employment; and

24 (ii) applies current and emerging accessi-
25 bility standards for extended reality tech-

1 nologies to provide physical and programmatic
2 accessibility, in accordance with section 188 of
3 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
4 (29 U.S.C. 3248).

5 (B) The entities described in this subparagraph
6 shall include one or more of the following:

7 (i) A disability advocacy group.

8 (ii) A researcher working on inclusive de-
9 sign and accessibility.

10 (iii) A consultant of inclusive design and
11 accessibility.

12 (iv) An extended reality platform manufac-
13 turer, software developer, or content developer.

14 (c) DURATION OF GRANTS.—A grant awarded under
15 this section shall be for a period of not more than 5 years,
16 except that in the case of an eligible entity that has carried
17 out a program or activity with such a grant that meets
18 the criteria for satisfactory progress on performance indi-
19 cators as determined under subsection (h)(1) for the ini-
20 tial 5-year grant period, the Secretary may award an addi-
21 tional grant under this section to such eligible entity.

22 (d) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking a grant
23 under this section shall submit to the Secretary an appli-
24 cation at such time, in such manner, and containing such
25 information as the Secretary may require.

1 (e) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this sec-
2 tion, the Secretary shall give priority to any eligible entity
3 that—

4 (1) is working with, or in carrying out a pro-
5 gram or activity to be funded with such a grant
6 plans to work with, an industry or sector partner-
7 ship that prioritizes the hiring of individuals who
8 have obtained a recognized postsecondary credential
9 as a result of the program or activity; or

10 (2) submits an application under subsection (d)
11 that demonstrates—

12 (A) alignment with—

13 (i) the State plan under section 102
14 or 103 of the Workforce Innovation and
15 Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3112; 3113)
16 of a State in which the eligible entity will
17 be carrying out a program or activity to be
18 funded with such a grant;

19 (ii) the local plan under section 108 of
20 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
21 Act (29 U.S.C. 3123) of a local area in
22 which such a program or activity will be
23 carried out; or

24 (iii) the State plan under section 122
25 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Tech-

1 nical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C.
2 2342) with respect to a State in which
3 such a program or activity will be carried
4 out;

5 (B) with quantitative data and evidence,
6 the extent to which the program or activity to
7 be funded by such a grant will meet the needs
8 of employers;

9 (C) how such a program or activity will
10 target a specific in-demand industry sector or
11 occupation which has a skills gap;

12 (D) how such a program or activity will re-
13 train workers from an industry sector that is
14 experiencing decreasing employment;

15 (E) how such a program or activity will
16 target individuals with barriers to employment;

17 (F) how such a program or activity will
18 serve an area of substantial unemployment (as
19 defined in section 132(b)(1)(B) of the Work-
20 force Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
21 U.S.C. 3172(b)(1)(B))); or

22 (G) how such a program or activity will
23 serve a rural area.

24 (f) REPORTS.—

1 (1) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—Each eligi-
2 ble entity receiving a grant under this section shall
3 submit to the Secretary a report for each year of the
4 grant period for such grant that includes a descrip-
5 tion of each program and activity funded under the
6 grant, including—

7 (A) the levels of performance achieved for
8 each indicator of performance under section
9 116(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Workforce Innovation
10 and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
11 3141(b)(2)(A)(i)), disaggregated, with respect
12 to the participants of such program or activity,
13 by age, race or ethnicity, gender, each sub-
14 population of individuals with barriers to em-
15 ployment, and status as a low-income indi-
16 vidual; and

17 (B) in a case of an eligible entity that
18 works with an industry or sector partnership in
19 carrying out such a program or activity, the
20 role of such partnership in carrying out the pro-
21 gram or activity.

22 (2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1
23 year after the first grant is awarded under this sec-
24 tion and biennially thereafter, the Secretary shall
25 submit to Congress a report that includes a sum-

1 mary of the information submitted under paragraph
2 (1) for the most recent 2-year period.

3 (g) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall reserve not
4 less than 1 percent and not more than 5 percent of any
5 amounts made available for each fiscal year to conduct
6 a rigorous, independent evaluation of, and technical assist-
7 ance for, the programs and activities carried out under
8 this section.

9 (h) SATISFACTORY PROGRESS.—

10 (1) DETERMINATION OF CRITERIA.—The Sec-
11 retary of Labor, in coordination with the Secretary
12 of Education, shall determine the criteria for satis-
13 factory progress on the indicators of performance
14 under section 116(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Workforce In-
15 novation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
16 3141(b)(2)(A)(i)) for programs and activities funded
17 by grants awarded to eligible entities under this sec-
18 tion.

19 (2) CESSATION OF FUNDS.—The Secretary may
20 not provide funds to any eligible entity under a
21 grant under this section after the third year of the
22 grant period unless each program and activity car-
23 ried out by the eligible entity with the grant has met
24 the criteria for satisfactory progress for the first 3

1 years of such grant period, as determined under
2 paragraph (1).

3 (i) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary, in coordina-
4 tion with the Secretary of Education and each eligible en-
5 tity that receives funds under grants awarded under this
6 section after the third year of the grant periods for such
7 grants, shall—

8 (1) establish best practices for using immersive
9 technology in workforce training and education pro-
10 grams; and

11 (2) publish such best practices on a publicly
12 available website of the Department of Labor.

13 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 (1) COVERED COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The
15 term “covered community college” means—

16 (A) a public institution of higher education
17 (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher
18 Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))), at
19 which—

20 (i) the highest degree awarded is an
21 associate degree; or

22 (ii) an associate degree is the most
23 frequently awarded degree;

24 (B) a branch campus of a 4-year public in-
25 stitution of higher education (as defined in sec-

1 tion 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965
2 (20 U.S.C. 1001)), if, at such branch campus—

3 (i) the highest degree awarded is an
4 associate degree; or

5 (ii) an associate degree is the most
6 frequently awarded degree;

7 (C) a 2-year Tribal College or University
8 (as defined in section 316(b)(3) of the Higher
9 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
10 1059c(b)(3))); or

11 (D) a degree-granting Tribal College or
12 University (as defined in section 316(b)(3) of
13 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
14 1059c(b)(3))) at which—

15 (i) the highest degree awarded is an
16 associate degree; or

17 (ii) an associate degree is the most
18 frequently awarded degree.

19 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
20 ty” means a partnership between or among a local
21 board or State board and—

22 (A) a covered community college;

23 (B) an area career and technical education
24 school;

1 (C) a postsecondary vocational institution
2 (as defined in section 102(c) of the Higher
3 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002(c))); or

4 (D) a consortium of such colleges, schools,
5 or institutions.

6 (3) IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “immersive
8 technology” means tools (including extended re-
9 ality, virtual reality, augmented reality, and
10 mixed augmented reality) that integrate the
11 physical environment with digital content to
12 support user engagement.

13 (B) VIRTUAL REALITY.—The term “virtual
14 reality” means an immersive technology tool
15 that occludes a user’s physical surroundings
16 with a simulated environment, such as a con-
17 struction site, a subway system, a coastal flood-
18 plain, or an energy grid.

19 (C) AUGMENTED REALITY.—The term
20 “augmented reality” means an immersive tech-
21 nology tool that layers computer-generated im-
22 agery onto a user’s view of the physical world,
23 thus providing a composite view.

24 (D) MIXED REALITY.—The term “mixed
25 reality” means an immersive technology tool

1 that blends augmented and virtual reality, al-
2 lowing users to experience simulated content
3 within their physical worlds and to manipulate
4 and interact with virtual elements in real time.

5 (4) RURAL.—The term “rural” means all popu-
6 lations, housing, and territories not included within
7 an urban area, in which an urban area is defined as
8 any gathered populations, housing, and territories
9 that meets or exceeds 50,000 or more people, or is
10 comprised of clusters consisting of at least 2,500
11 gathered populations, housing, and territory but less
12 than 50,000 people.

13 (5) WIOA TERMS.—Except as otherwise pro-
14 vided in this section, any term used in this section
15 that is defined in section 3 of the Workforce Innova-
16 tion and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3102) shall
17 have the meaning given that term in such section 3
18 (29 U.S.C. 3102).

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