

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 882

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

Ms. WILSON of Florida (for herself, Mr. BOWMAN, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. EVANS, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. PRESSLEY, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. NORTON, Ms. TOKUDA, Mr. CARSON, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. SYKES, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mrs. MCBATH, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. SHERRILL, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. KIM of New Jersey, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. STEVENS, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. BROWN, Mr. LANDSMAN, Mr. MOSKOWITZ, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. POCAN, Ms. WILD, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, and Mr. LIEU) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “American Teacher
3 Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Teachers are the backbone of our nation,
7 from the first bell to the last bell, they act as care-
8 givers, counselors, role models, advocates, and cheer-
9 leaders, helping children achieve their greatest po-
10 tential.

11 (2) What is more, teacher shortages are among
12 the most pressing threats to education access today,
13 with districts across the country forced to radically
14 adjust school offerings to respond to turnover and
15 prolonged vacancies. Every day, stories surface of
16 schools shortening their weeks, canceling courses, in-
17 creasing student-teacher ratios, and placing under-
18 prepared or temporary substitute staff in core in-
19 structional roles. Such adjustments disrupt learning,
20 take a sustained toll on teacher morale, and harm
21 student achievement.

22 (3) The teacher wage penalty, characterizing
23 lower weekly wages and overall compensation for
24 teachers compared to college-educated peers in other
25 professions, hit an all-time high of 23.5 percent in
26 2021 and continues to demonstrate significant, ad-

1 verse impacts on teacher recruitment and retention.
2 According to a recent report by the Teacher Salary
3 Project, over 90 percent of teachers believe low sal-
4 ary contributes to shortages in their communities
5 and over 45 percent believe their salary is insuffi-
6 cient for medium and long-term career sustain-
7 ability.

8 (4) Significant numbers of teachers report
9 maintaining multiple jobs to make ends meet or
10 being able to work in their profession only through
11 the support of a partner’s higher-paying job. This
12 instability is worse for teachers of color who are
13 more likely to work in under-resourced schools. As
14 a result, high-poverty communities face a com-
15 pounded burden.

16 (5) In August of 2022, the White House issued
17 a fact sheet renewing attention to the weak teacher
18 pipeline and calling upon legislators to use federal,
19 state, and local resources to strengthen teaching ca-
20 reer pathways and ensure competitive, livable wages.
21 This statement accompanies efforts by twenty-five
22 states to propose and enact legislation addressing
23 teacher compensation since January 2021.

24 (6) To restore stability in our schools and se-
25 cure equitable access to high-quality education, we

1 must raise awareness surrounding the value of
2 teaching as a profession and provide compensation
3 that reflects this value.

4 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO SUPPORT STATE EFFORTS TO IN-**
5 **CREASE TEACHER SALARIES.**

6 (a) **TEACHER SALARY INCENTIVE GRANTS.**—

7 (1) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this section is
8 to ensure that each teacher who is employed full-
9 time at a qualifying school in a State earns an an-
10 nual salary for any year of employment of not less
11 than \$60,000 (adjusted for inflation).

12 (2) **GRANTS FOR MINIMUM SALARY THRESH-**
13 **OLD.**—

14 (A) **IN GENERAL.**—From amounts made
15 available to carry out this section, the Secretary
16 of Education shall award 4-year grants to State
17 educational agencies.

18 (B) **APPLICATION.**—To be eligible to re-
19 ceive such a grant, the State educational agency
20 shall submit an application to the Secretary at
21 such time, in such manner, and containing such
22 information as the Secretary may require, in-
23 cluding—

24 (i) the plan required under subpara-
25 graph (C); and

1 (ii) the assurances required under
2 subparagraph (D).

3 (C) SUSTAINABILITY PLAN.—The Sec-
4 retary shall require a State educational agency
5 submitting an application under subparagraph
6 (B) to provide a plan that demonstrates how,
7 following the conclusion of the 4-year grant pe-
8 riod, such agency will continue to maintain and
9 adjust the annual base minimum salary in ac-
10 cordance with subsection (b).

11 (D) REQUIRED ASSURANCES.—The Sec-
12 retary shall require a State educational agency
13 submitting an application under subparagraph
14 (B) to provide an assurance in such application
15 that—

16 (i) if necessary to achieve the purpose
17 of this section, the State will enact and en-
18 force legislation to establish a statewide
19 teacher salary schedule or otherwise to es-
20 tablish minimum teacher salary require-
21 ments;

22 (ii) each teacher described in para-
23 graph (1) will be compensated on a salary
24 basis at an annual rate per school year

1 that is not less than the salary threshold
2 described in subsection (b);

3 (iii) each teacher who is employed
4 part-time at a qualifying school in a State
5 will be compensated on a salary basis at an
6 annual rate per school year that is not less
7 than the salary threshold described in sub-
8 section (b), proportionately reduced in ac-
9 cordance with the number of hours worked
10 by such teacher;

11 (iv) priority will be given to local edu-
12 cational agencies in accordance with sub-
13 paragraph (E)(ii); and

14 (v) the State educational agency will,
15 upon request by the Secretary, carry out
16 the compliance demonstration in accord-
17 ance with subsection (c)(3).

18 (E) SUBGRANTS.—

19 (i) IN GENERAL.—A State educational
20 agency awarded a grant under this section
21 shall use not less than 85 percent of the
22 grant funds to award subgrants to local
23 educational agencies to carry out the pur-
24 pose of this section.

1 (ii) PRIORITY.—The State educational
2 agency, in allocating funds to local edu-
3 cational agencies under this section, shall
4 give priority to local educational agen-
5 cies—

6 (I) serving greater numbers or
7 percentages of elementary or sec-
8 ondary schools receiving funds under
9 title I of the Elementary and Sec-
10 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20
11 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.); or

12 (II) with respect to which all of
13 the schools served by the local edu-
14 cational agency are designated with a
15 locale code of 41, 42, or 43, as deter-
16 mined by the Secretary.

17 (b) SALARY THRESHOLD.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—For school year 2024–2025,
19 the base minimum salary dollar amount shall be
20 \$60,000.

21 (2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—For school year
22 2025–2026 and each succeeding school year, the dol-
23 lar amount referred to in paragraph (1) shall be
24 deemed to refer to the dollar amount calculated
25 under this subsection for the preceding school year,

1 increased by a percentage equal to the annual per-
2 centage increase in the Consumer Price Index for All
3 Urban Consumers published by the Department of
4 Labor for the most recent calendar year.

5 (3) NO SALARY LIMIT.—The base minimum sal-
6 ary dollar amount may be greater than the dollar
7 amount described in paragraphs (1) or (2).

8 (c) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Grant funds received under
10 this section shall be used to supplement and not
11 supplant other Federal, State, and local public funds
12 that would, in the absence of such Federal funds, be
13 made available for teacher base salaries.

14 (2) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—A State edu-
15 cational agency or local educational agency shall not
16 reduce or adjust any teacher pay or State teacher
17 loan forgiveness program due to the eligibility of
18 teachers within the jurisdiction of such agency for
19 pay supplementation under this section.

20 (3) COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION TO SEC-
21 RETARY.—Each State educational agency and local
22 educational agency, upon request by the Secretary,
23 shall demonstrate that the methodology used to allo-
24 cate teacher pay and State teacher loan forgiveness
25 (if applicable) to teachers and qualifying schools en-

1 sures that each such teacher and school receives the
2 same State and local funds for teacher compensation
3 it would receive if this Act had not been enacted.

4 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER SALARIES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made available to
6 carry out this section, the Secretary of Education shall
7 award grants to eligible State educational agencies to pro-
8 vide, in accordance with subsection (c), cost-of-living ad-
9 justments to the annual base salary of such State and the
10 annual salary of each teacher who is employed full-time
11 at a qualifying school in such State.

12 (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive such a
13 grant, the State educational agency shall submit an appli-
14 cation to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and
15 containing such information as the Secretary may require,
16 including the demonstration required under subsection
17 (d)(2).

18 (c) ADJUSTMENT.—The annual base salary of the
19 State and the annual salary of each teacher described in
20 subsection (a) shall be increased by a percentage equal to
21 the annual percentage increase in the Consumer Price
22 Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Depart-
23 ment of Labor for the most recent calendar year.

24 (d) ELIGIBLE STATE DEFINED.—In this section, the
25 term “eligible State” means a State—

1 (1) with an annual base salary of not less than
2 \$60,000 for teachers who are employed full-time at
3 a qualifying school; and

4 (2) that demonstrates in the application sub-
5 mitted under subsection (b) that, due to inflation,
6 such State is unable to adjust such base salary or
7 the annual salaries of such teachers for cost-of-liv-
8 ing.

9 **SEC. 5. ENHANCED AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF TEACH-**
10 **ING PROFESSION.**

11 The Secretary may reserve not more than 4 percent
12 of the funds appropriated under section 8 to carry out a
13 national campaign—

14 (1) to increase awareness about the importance
15 of teachers and the value of the teaching profession;

16 (2) to encourage secondary school and college
17 students to consider teaching as a professional ca-
18 reer; and

19 (3) to diversify the pool of individuals who enter
20 the teaching profession.

21 **SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

22 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to alter or oth-
23 erwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures afforded
24 to school or local educational agency employees under Fed-
25 eral, State, or local laws (including applicable regulations,

1 court orders, or requirements that local educational agen-
2 cies negotiate or meet and confer in good faith) or under
3 the terms of collective bargaining agreements, memoranda
4 of understanding, or other agreements between such em-
5 ployers and their employees.

6 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **ESEA DEFINITIONS.**—The terms “elemen-
9 tary school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary
10 school”, “Secretary”, “State”, and “State edu-
11 cational agency” have the meanings given such
12 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-
13 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

14 (2) **QUALIFYING SCHOOL.**—The term “quali-
15 fying school” means, with respect to any school year,
16 a public elementary school or a public secondary
17 school.

18 (3) **TEACHER.**—The term “teacher” means an
19 individual who—

20 (A) is a teacher of record who provides di-
21 rect classroom teaching (or classroom-type
22 teaching in a nonclassroom setting) in a quali-
23 fying school for not less than the normal or
24 statutory number of hours of work for a full-
25 time or part-time teacher over a complete

1 school year (as determined by the State in
2 which the school is located);

3 (B) meets the applicable requirements for
4 State certification or licensure, as applicable, in
5 the State in which such school is located and in
6 the subject area in which the individual is the
7 teacher of record; and

8 (C) possesses skills and knowledge needed
9 for effective classroom practice, including with
10 respect to demonstrating the ability to improve
11 student learning.

12 (4) TEACHER OF RECORD.—The term “teacher
13 of record” means a teacher who has—

14 (A) been assigned the responsibility for
15 specified pupils’ learning in a grade, subject, or
16 course as reflected on the school’s official
17 record of attendance;

18 (B) learned and developed extensive teach-
19 ing and basic classroom management skills; and

20 (C) demonstrated the ability to plan and
21 deliver instruction to students from different
22 cultural backgrounds and with different learn-
23 ing styles and to assess and support student
24 learning.

1 **SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 this Act such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years
4 2024 through 2028.

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