

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 977

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to create a demonstration project to fund additional secondary school counselors in troubled title I schools to reduce the dropout rate.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 7, 2017

Ms. SÁNCHEZ (for herself, Mr. GARAMENDI, and Mr. LANGEVIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to create a demonstration project to fund additional secondary school counselors in troubled title I schools to reduce the dropout rate.

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 “Put School Counselors
5 Where They’re Needed Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR ADDITIONAL SEC-**
2 **ONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS.**

3 Part D of title I of the Elementary and Secondary
4 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6421 et seq.) is amend-
5 ed by adding at the end the following:

6 **“Subpart 4—Demonstration Project for Additional**
7 **Secondary School Counselors**

8 **“SEC. 1441. FINDINGS.**

9 “The Congress finds the following:

10 “(1) Nationally, only 70 percent of students
11 graduate from high school with a regular high school
12 diploma.

13 “(2) Every school day, 7,000 American high
14 school students become dropouts.

15 “(3) High school students living in low-income
16 families drop out of school at three times the rate
17 of their peers from high-income families.

18 “(4) Only about 55 percent of African Amer-
19 ican students and 52 percent of Hispanic students
20 graduate on time from high school with a regular di-
21 ploma, compared to 78 percent of white students.

22 “(5) The dropout rate for students with disabil-
23 ities is approximately twice that of general education
24 students.

25 “(6) High school is the final transition into
26 adulthood and the world of work as students begin

1 defining their independence and forging their own
2 pathways. As our next generation of leaders, our
3 youth, are deciding their futures, they are faced with
4 many challenges, including peer pressure and bul-
5 lying, high-stakes testing, the challenges of college
6 admissions, the scholarship and financial aid appli-
7 cation process, and entrance into an ever more com-
8 petitive job market. Students need guidance and
9 skills to help them navigate these complex decisions,
10 which have serious and life changing consequences.

11 “(7) School counseling programs are essential
12 for students to achieve optimal personal growth, ac-
13 quire positive social skills and values, set appropriate
14 career goals, and realize full academic potential to
15 become productive, contributing members of the
16 world community.

17 “(8) Professional secondary school counselors
18 are highly qualified educators with a mental health
19 perspective who understand and respond to the chal-
20 lenges presented by today’s diverse student popu-
21 lation.

22 “(9) The professional secondary school coun-
23 selor holds a master’s degree or higher in school
24 counseling (or the substantial equivalent), and is

1 certified or licensed by the State in which the coun-
2 selor works.

3 “(10) Professional secondary school counselors
4 are integral to the total educational program. They
5 provide proactive leadership that engages all stake-
6 holders in the delivery of programs and services to
7 help the student achieve success in school. Profes-
8 sional secondary school counselors align and work
9 with the school’s mission to support the academic
10 achievement of all students as they prepare for the
11 ever-changing world of the 21st century.

12 “(11) Professional secondary school counselors’
13 opportunities to assist students are often hindered
14 by extraordinarily high student-to-counselor ratios.
15 Currently, the average student-to-counselor ratio in
16 America’s public schools is 471 to 1. The American
17 School Counselor Association, the American Coun-
18 seling Association, and the National Association for
19 College Admissions Counseling all recommend a
20 ratio of one school counselor to 250 students and a
21 lower ratio for counselors working primarily with
22 students at risk.

23 **“SEC. 1442. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT.**

24 “(a) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made available to
25 carry out this subpart, the Secretary shall carry out a

1 demonstration project under which the Secretary makes
2 grants on a competitive basis to secondary schools that
3 receive funds under this title and have a four-year ad-
4 justed cohort graduation rate of 60 percent or lower.

5 “(b) GRANTS.—A grant under this subpart shall be
6 for a period of 4 years and may be used—

7 “(1) to provide additional school counselors
8 during that period; and

9 “(2) to provide additional resources (such as
10 professional development expenses or travel expenses
11 for home visits, and any services and materials re-
12 ferred to in subsection (d)) and to pay overhead ex-
13 penses.

14 “(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
15 gress that a participating school should aim to provide,
16 under subsection (b)(1), one additional counselor per 250
17 students at risk.

18 “(d) SCOPE OF COUNSELING.—The additional school
19 counselors shall identify students who are at risk of not
20 graduating in 4 years and shall provide counseling pri-
21 marily to those students. The counselors may identify such
22 students at any time, but shall strive to identify them be-
23 fore they enter grade 9. Services shall be provided as long
24 as necessary, including to the extent allowable and appro-

1 piate, after the student’s cohort graduation date. The
2 counseling provided—

3 “(1) may include a full panoply of services, in-
4 cluding an individual graduation plan and other re-
5 sources, such as appropriate course placement and
6 supplemental services (to include not only supple-
7 mental educational services tutoring if available at
8 the school site, but also other tutoring as necessary,
9 along with supplemental books and materials); and

10 “(2) shall include meetings with each student so
11 identified and with the teachers, tutors, supple-
12 mental educational services providers, and parents of
13 the student, and may also include meetings with
14 other relevant individuals, such as a probation offi-
15 cer, mentor, coach, or employer of the student.

16 “(e) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—Funds under
17 this subpart shall be used to supplement, not supplant,
18 funds from non-Federal sources. The additional school
19 counselors provided through funds under this subpart
20 must be in addition to any employees who work in the
21 secondary school guidance or counseling office, such as
22 counselors, college admissions specialists, career develop-
23 ment specialists, guidance information specialists, or any
24 other professional or paraprofessional.

25 “(f) ADDITIONAL GRANT PERIODS.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A school that receives a
2 grant under this subpart and demonstrates adequate
3 improvement over the period of the grant is eligible
4 to receive a second grant for a second period. If the
5 school again demonstrates adequate improvement
6 over that second period, the school is eligible to re-
7 ceive a third grant for a third period. The third
8 grant shall provide amounts that decrease for each
9 year of the third period and require the school to
10 provide corresponding increases in non-Federal
11 funds.

12 “(2) ADEQUATE IMPROVEMENT.—For purposes
13 of paragraph (1), a school demonstrates adequate
14 improvement over a grant period if the four-year ad-
15 justed cohort graduation rate increases (or is pro-
16 jected to increase) by 10 percent or more over that
17 period.

18 “(g) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall carry out the
19 demonstration project in at least 10 schools. The first five
20 schools selected to participate shall each be from a dif-
21 ferent State.

22 **“SEC. 1443. DEFINITION.**

23 “(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subpart, the
24 term ‘regular high school diploma’ means the standard
25 high school diploma awarded to the preponderance of stu-

1 dents in the State that is fully aligned with State stand-
2 ards, or a higher diploma, and does not include GEDs,
3 certificates of attendance, or any lesser diploma award.

4 “(b) SPECIAL RULE.—For those students who have
5 significant cognitive disabilities and are assessed using an
6 alternate assessment aligned to alternate achievement
7 standards, receipt of a regular high school diploma or
8 State-defined alternate diploma aligned with completion of
9 their entitlement under the Individuals with Disabilities
10 Education Act shall be counted as graduates with a reg-
11 ular high school diploma for the purposes of this Act. No
12 more than 1 percent of students can be counted as grad-
13 uates with a regular high school diploma under this sub-
14 paragraph.

15 **“SEC. 1444. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

16 “There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
17 this subpart \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2018
18 through 2021.”.

19 **SEC. 3. CONFORMING AMENDMENT; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

20 (a) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1002(d) of
21 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20
22 U.S.C. 6302(d)) is amended by inserting “(other than
23 subpart 4)” after “part D,”.

24 (b) TOC.—The table of contents in section 2 of the
25 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is

1 amended by inserting after the item relating to section
2 1432 the following:

“SUBPART 4—DEMONSTRATION PROJECT FOR ADDITIONAL SECONDARY
SCHOOL COUNSELORS

- “Sec. 1841. Findings.
- “Sec. 1842. Demonstration project.
- “Sec. 1843. Definition.
- “Sec. 1844. Authorization of appropriations.”.

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