

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1780

To remove college cost as a barrier to every student having access to a well-prepared and diverse educator workforce, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 20, 2021

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MARKEY, and Ms. WARREN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To remove college cost as a barrier to every student having access to a well-prepared and diverse educator workforce, 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 “Diversifying by Invest-
5 ing in Educators and Students To Improve Outcomes For
6 Youth Act” or the “Diversify Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Schools predominantly enrolling historically
2 underserved students are often disproportionately
3 impacted by teacher shortages.

4 (2) According to Department of Education data
5 for the 2020–2021 school year, to date 43 States
6 are reporting shortages in mathematics teachers, 42
7 in science teachers, and 44 in special education
8 teachers.

9 (3) Data shows that, between 2009 and 2017,
10 teacher education enrollments dropped from 691,000
11 to 444,000, a 38-percent reduction. This amounts to
12 a decrease of about 340,000 professionals on their
13 way to becoming teachers in the year 2017, as com-
14 pared to 2009.

15 (4) Current data show that the impacts of
16 COVID–19 may be further exacerbating student ac-
17 cess to well-prepared and diverse teachers through
18 declining higher education enrollments and potential
19 increased turnover due to pandemic teaching condi-
20 tions, among other factors.

21 (5) About 80 percent of educators begin teach-
22 ing with a bachelor’s degree, yet the latest Federal
23 data show a 4.5-percent decline in undergraduate
24 enrollment in the Spring of 2021. Enrollment de-
25 clines have inequitably impacted students of color.

1 (6) In an August 2020 Census Bureau survey,
2 respondents cited their inability to pay as a factor
3 in their decision to forgo college.

4 (7) Research suggests that service scholarship
5 programs like the TEACH Grant Program are suc-
6 cessful when they are both administratively manage-
7 able and when subsidies are large enough to sub-
8 stantially offset training costs. Efforts to increase
9 the TEACH Grant award amount must be combined
10 with efforts to ensure that the program is adminis-
11 tratively manageable. In order for the TEACH
12 Grant Program to meet its full potential, the re-
13 search is clear that both criteria need to be ad-
14 dressed.

15 (8) The TEACH Grant's award amount has not
16 increased since its creation in the bipartisan College
17 Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110–
18 84). In addition, due to the Budget Control Act of
19 2011 (Public Law 112–25), the maximum amount
20 of grant aid available under the TEACH Grant Pro-
21 gram of \$4,000 a year has been cut for a majority
22 of the program's existence. This comes at a time
23 when the yearly full cost of a public 4-year college
24 for an in-State student exceeds \$20,000. Further,
25 more than two-thirds of individuals entering the field

1 of education borrow money to pay for their higher
2 education, resulting in an average debt of about
3 \$20,000 for those with a bachelor's degree and
4 \$50,000 for those with a master's degree.

5 (9) Grant programs can eliminate or reduce the
6 need to borrow student loans in order to afford a
7 college education. This is important because a col-
8 lege student's potential debt burden influences the
9 student's decisions about what profession to enter,
10 with the result that the student is less likely to pur-
11 sue a career in education or take other low-paying
12 jobs after graduation if the student expects to incur
13 more debt. This is especially true for students of
14 color, who, according to a recent report, are more
15 likely to come from families that are unable to con-
16 tribute financially to their higher education.

17 (10) Students with disabilities, including stu-
18 dents of color with disabilities, are also likely to ac-
19 crue significant student loan debt. This often results
20 from limited ability to work while in school due to
21 the increased time needed for coursework.

22 (11) Teachers of color face unique barriers to
23 entering and staying in the profession. For example,
24 teachers of color are more likely to enter teaching
25 through alternative pathways due to the high cost of

1 traditional teacher preparation programs and the
2 debt burden faced by college students of color.
3 Lower quality pathways can result in less effective
4 teaching and high turnover rates. Research shows
5 that candidates who receive comprehensive prepara-
6 tion are 2 to 3 times more likely to stay in teaching
7 than those who receive little training. In many cases,
8 however, teachers of color are more likely to begin
9 teaching without having completed comprehensive
10 preparation and entering instead through alternative
11 routes that often skip student teaching and key
12 coursework, leaving teachers to learn on the job.

13 (12) Research shows that recruiting and retain-
14 ing a diverse teacher workforce is key to improving
15 outcomes for all students and for closing achieve-
16 ment gaps. While White students also benefit by
17 learning from teachers of color, the impact is espe-
18 cially significant for students of color, who have
19 higher test scores, are more likely to graduate high
20 school, and more likely to succeed in college when
21 they have had teachers of color who serve as role
22 models and support their attachment to school and
23 learning.

1 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE TEACH GRANTS PROGRAM**
 2 **UNDER THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF**
 3 **1965.**

4 Subpart 9 of part A of title IV of the Higher Edu-
 5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070g et seq.) is amend-
 6 ed—

7 (1) in section 420L(1), by inserting “(except
 8 that such term does not include an institution de-
 9 scribed in subsection (a)(1)(A) of section 102)” after
 10 “102”;

11 (2) in section 420M—

12 (A) in subsection (a)(1), by striking
 13 “\$4,000” and inserting “\$8,000”;

14 (B) in subsection (b)(3), by striking the
 15 second and third sentences and inserting the
 16 following: “Any disbursement allowed to be
 17 made by crediting the teacher candidate’s ac-
 18 count shall be used for the full cost of attend-
 19 ance (as defined in section 472).”; and

20 (C) in subsection (d)—

21 (i) in paragraph (1)(B), by striking
 22 “\$16,000” and inserting “\$32,000”; and

23 (ii) in paragraph (2), by striking
 24 “\$8,000” and inserting “\$16,000”; and

25 (3) in section 420N—

26 (A) in subsection (b)—

1 (i) by striking paragraphs (2) and (3);

2 (ii) by striking “an agreement” and
 3 all that follows through “the applicant
 4 will” and inserting “an agreement by the
 5 applicant that the applicant will”;

6 (iii) by redesignating subparagraphs
 7 (A) through (E) as paragraphs (1) through
 8 (5), respectively, and moving the margins
 9 of such paragraphs (as so redesignated) 2
 10 ems to the left;

11 (iv) by redesignating clauses (i)
 12 through (vii) as subparagraphs (A)
 13 through (G), respectively, and moving the
 14 margins of such subparagraphs (as so re-
 15 designated) 2 ems to the left;

16 (v) in paragraph (2), as redesignated
 17 by clause (iii), by striking “teach in a
 18 school described in section 465(a)(2)(A)”
 19 and inserting “teach in a school described
 20 in section 465(a)(2)(A) or teach in a high-
 21 need early education program”; and

22 (vi) in paragraph (3), as redesignated
 23 by clause (iii)—

1 (I) in subparagraph (F), as re-
 2 designated by clause (iv), by striking
 3 “or” after the semicolon;

4 (II) in subparagraph (G), as re-
 5 designated by clause (iv), by inserting
 6 “or” after the semicolon; and

7 (III) by adding at the end the
 8 following:

9 “(H) early childhood education;”; and

10 (B) by striking subsection (c) and insert-
 11 ing the following:

12 “(c) CERTIFICATE.—Upon the completion of the
 13 service requirement in subsection (b), the Secretary shall
 14 send to the recipient of a grant under this subpart an elec-
 15 tronic certificate documenting the completion of such serv-
 16 ice.”;

17 (C) by redesignating subsection (d) as sub-
 18 section (e);

19 (D) by inserting after subsection (c) the
 20 following:

21 “(d) PROHIBITION.—The Secretary may not institute
 22 or create a monetary penalty for failure or refusal to com-
 23 plete the service requirement under subsection (b).”; and

24 (E) in subsection (e), as redesignated by
 25 subparagraph (C)—

1 (i) by striking “subsection
 2 (b)(1)(C)(vii)” and inserting “subsection
 3 (b)(3)(G)”;

4 (ii) by striking “subsection (b)(1)”
 5 and inserting “subsection (b)”.

6 **SEC. 4. AMENDMENT TO THE BALANCED BUDGET AND DEF-**
 7 **ICIT CONTROL ACT.**

8 (a) EXEMPTION OF PROGRAM FROM SEQUESTRA-
 9 TION.—Section 255(h) of the Balanced Budget and Emer-
 10 gency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 905(h)) is
 11 amended by inserting after the item relating to “Supple-
 12 mental Security Income Program (28–0406–0–1–609).”
 13 the following new item:

14 “TEACH Grants under subpart 9 of part A of
 15 title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.”.

16 (b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by this
 17 section shall apply to any sequestration order issued under
 18 the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act
 19 of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900 et seq.) on or after the date of
 20 enactment of this Act.

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