

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2276

To support empowerment, economic security, and educational opportunities
for adolescent girls around the world, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 24, 2021

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Ms. MURKOWSKI) introduced the following
bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To support empowerment, economic security, and educational
opportunities for adolescent girls around the world, 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; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Keeping Girls in School Act”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
7 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Appropriate congressional committees defined.
- Sec. 3. Findings.
- Sec. 4. Sense of Congress.
- Sec. 5. Secondary education for adolescent girls.

Sec. 6. Global strategy requirement.

Sec. 7. Transparency and reporting to Congress.

1 **SEC. 2. APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DE-**
2 **FINED.**

3 In this Act, the term “appropriate congressional com-
4 mittees” means—

5 (1) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
6 Committee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
7 resentatives; and

8 (2) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
9 the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

10 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

11 Congress finds the following:

12 (1) Adolescence is a critical period in a girl’s
13 life, when significant physical, emotional, and social
14 changes shape her future.

15 (2) Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable
16 to HIV/AIDS, child, early and forced marriage, and
17 other forms of violence which are detrimental to
18 their futures, as evidenced by the following statistics:

19 (A) Each year, 380,000 adolescent girls
20 and young women become newly infected with
21 HIV, more than 1,000 every day, and comprise
22 the fastest-growing demographic for new infec-
23 tions in sub-Saharan Africa.

1 (B) Each year, 12,000,000 adolescent girls
2 around the world are married before their 18th
3 birthday, and more than 650,000,000 women
4 alive today were married as children.

5 (C) Child marriages often interrupt school-
6 ing, limit opportunities, and impact the phys-
7 ical, psychological and social well-being of such
8 girls. Significant levels of lockdown-related dis-
9 ruption and economic crisis due to the COVID-
10 19 pandemic could lead to at least 4,000,000
11 more girls married before the age of 18 in the
12 next two years.

13 (D) One-quarter to one-half of girls in de-
14 veloping countries become mothers before the
15 age of 18, and girls under 15 are five times
16 more likely to die during childbirth than women
17 in their 20s. As many as 1,000,000 girls across
18 sub-Saharan Africa may be blocked from re-
19 turning to school due to pregnancy during
20 COVID-19 school closures.

21 (3) Before the pandemic, approximately
22 130,000,000 girls around the world were not in
23 school, and millions more failing to acquire basic
24 reading, writing, and numeracy skills. With COVID-
25 19 school closures affecting nearly 91 percent of the

1 world's student population, over 743,000,000 girls
2 have had their education disrupted and will face tre-
3 mendous barriers to returning to school when it is
4 safe.

5 (4) Girls between the ages of 10 and 19 are
6 three times more likely than boys to be kept out of
7 school, particularly in countries affected by conflict.

8 (5) Due to discriminatory gender norms and ex-
9 pectations, disparities in access to safe and quality
10 education manifest early in a girl's life and continue
11 to become more pronounced throughout adolescence.

12 (6) Girls living with disabilities are less likely to
13 start school and transition to secondary school than
14 boys living with disabilities and other children, and
15 just 1 percent of women with disabilities are literate
16 globally.

17 (7) While two-thirds of all countries have
18 achieved gender parity in primary education, only 40
19 percent have achieved gender parity in secondary
20 education.

21 (8) Adolescent girls who remain in school are
22 more likely to live longer, marry later, and have
23 healthier children.

24 (9) Investing in holistic programming that en-
25 sures all girls complete secondary education could

1 lift gross domestic product (GDP) in developing
2 economies by an average of 10 percent and every \$1
3 spent on such programming would generate a \$2.80
4 return—equivalent to billions of dollars in extra
5 GDP.

6 (10) Children born to women who completed
7 secondary schooling or higher have 17.5 percent re-
8 duced odds of being off track for healthy develop-
9 ment.

10 (11) Since July 2015, more than 100 public-
11 private partnerships have been formed between the
12 United States Government and external partners to
13 support innovative and community-led solutions in
14 targeted countries, including Malawi and Tanzania,
15 to ensure adolescent girls receive a quality edu-
16 cation.

17 (12) The United States Global Strategy to Em-
18 power Adolescent Girls, published in March 2016,
19 has brought together the Department of State, the
20 United States Agency for International Develop-
21 ment, the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Chal-
22 lenge Corporation, as well as other agencies and pro-
23 grams such as the President’s Emergency Fund for
24 AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), to address the range of
25 challenges preventing adolescent girls from attaining

1 an inclusive and equitable quality education leading
2 to relevant learning outcomes.

3 (13) Adopted in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for
4 Sustainable Development renews the commitment to
5 creating a world where all girls are healthy and pro-
6 tected, learning and have a fair chance to succeed.
7 This agenda also states that empowering girls will
8 require scaling up investments in holistic program-
9 ming models to end gender-based violence, child
10 marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM) and
11 adolescent girls' education and skills are essential to
12 address gender divides, particularly in secondary
13 school.

14 (14) PEPFAR, through its DREAMS (Deter-
15 mined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored,
16 and Safe) Initiative, has worked to address a num-
17 ber of the specific barriers to education that adoles-
18 cent girls face.

19 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

20 It is the sense of Congress that—

21 (1) every child, regardless of place of birth, de-
22 serves an equal opportunity to access quality edu-
23 cation;

24 (2) the United States has been a global leader
25 in efforts to expand and improve access to quality

1 basic education for all, particularly marginalized and
2 vulnerable populations, including women and girls;

3 (3) gains with respect to girls' secondary edu-
4 cation and empowerment have been proven to cor-
5 relate strongly with progress in gender equality and
6 women's rights, a stated priority of United States
7 foreign policy and national security;

8 (4) achieving gender parity in both access to
9 and quality of educational opportunity contributes
10 significantly to economic growth and development,
11 thereby lowering the risk for violence and instability;
12 and

13 (5) education is a lifesaving humanitarian inter-
14 vention that protects the lives, futures, and well-
15 being of girls.

16 **SEC. 5. SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS.**

17 (a) **AUTHORITY.**—The Administrator of the United
18 States Agency for International Development shall enter
19 into agreements, including agreements across sectors, to
20 address the barriers described in subsection (b) that ado-
21 lescent girls face in accessing a quality secondary edu-
22 cation in countries where adolescent girls are significantly
23 more likely to drop out of school than boys. Such activities
24 shall—

1 (1) seek to support the needs of adolescent girls
 2 holistically to achieve positive life and learning out-
 3 comes;

4 (2) use existing United States Government
 5 strategies and frameworks relevant to international
 6 basic education and gender equality to—

7 (A) integrate new technologies, digital
 8 learning enhancements and multi-sectoral ap-
 9 proaches to girl’s education such as distance
 10 learning and accelerated education for out-of-
 11 school youth;

12 (B) apply evidence-based approaches;

13 (C) promote inclusive, equitable and sus-
 14 tainable educational achievement; and

15 (D) support a responsible transition to
 16 education systems that are sustainably financed
 17 by domestic governments; and

18 (3) ensure that schools provide safe and quality
 19 educational opportunities and create empowering en-
 20 vironments, so that girls can enroll in and regularly
 21 attend school, successfully transition from primary
 22 to secondary school, and eventually graduate having
 23 achieved learning outcomes and positioned to make
 24 healthy transitions into adulthood.

1 (b) SPECIFIC BARRIERS.—The barriers described in
 2 this subsection are—

3 (1) harmful social and cultural norms;

4 (2) lack of safety at school or traveling to
 5 school and online, including harassment and other
 6 forms of physical, sexual, or psychological violence;

7 (3) child, early, and forced marriage;

8 (4) female genital mutilation;

9 (5) distance from a secondary school;

10 (6) cost of secondary schooling, including fees,
 11 clothing, and supplies;

12 (7) inadequate sanitation facilities and products
 13 available at secondary schools;

14 (8) prioritization of boys' secondary education;

15 (9) poor nutrition;

16 (10) early pregnancy and motherhood;

17 (11) HIV infection;

18 (12) disability;

19 (13) discrimination based on religious or ethnic
 20 identity;

21 (14) heavy workload due to household tasks or
 22 care burdens; and

23 (15) inequitable access to digital resources.

24 (c) COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The United States Agency
2 for International Development Senior Coordinator
3 for International Basic Education Assistance, in co-
4 ordination with the United States Agency for Inter-
5 national Development Senior Coordinator for Gender
6 Equality and Women’s Empowerment and the Am-
7 bassador-at-Large for Global Women’s Issues at the
8 Department of State, shall be responsible for the
9 oversight and coordination of all activities of the
10 United States Government carried out under this
11 section.

12 (2) DEVELOPMENT OF AGREEMENTS.—In the
13 development of agreements described in subsection
14 (a), the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and
15 Women’s Empowerment and the Senior Coordinator
16 for International Basic Education Assistance at the
17 United States Agency for International Development
18 shall consult with representatives across Federal de-
19 partments and agencies implementing the global
20 strategy described in section 6.

21 (3) COORDINATION WITH OTHER STRATE-
22 GIES.—Activities carried out under this section shall
23 also be carried out in coordination with—

1 (A) the United States Global Strategy to
2 Empower Adolescent Girls described in section
3 6; and

4 (B) the United States Government Strat-
5 egy on International Basic Education, including
6 its objective to expand access to quality basic
7 education for all, particularly marginalized and
8 vulnerable populations.

9 (d) ACCEPTANCE OF SOLICITATIONS FOR AWARDS.—
10 The Administrator of the United States Agency for Inter-
11 national Development shall seek to accept solicitations for
12 awards, pursuant to the authority in subsection (a), to
13 conduct activities under this section beginning not later
14 than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

15 (e) MONITORING AND EVALUATION.—The Adminis-
16 trator of the United States Agency for International De-
17 velopment shall seek to ensure that activities carried out
18 under this section—

19 (1) employ rigorous monitoring and evaluation
20 methodologies to ensure that such activities demon-
21 strably close the gap in gender parity for secondary
22 education and improve the quality of education of-
23 fered to adolescent girls;

24 (2) disaggregate all data collected and reported
25 by age, gender, marital and motherhood status, dis-

1 ability, and urbanity, to the extent practicable and
2 appropriate; and

3 (3) use, to the extent possible, indicators and
4 methodologies identified by the Interagency Working
5 Group for the Strategy on International Basic Edu-
6 cation.

7 **SEC. 6. GLOBAL STRATEGY REQUIREMENT.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
9 date of the enactment of this Act, and every 5 years there-
10 after for not less than 10 years, the Ambassador-at-Large
11 for Global Women’s Issues at the Department of State,
12 in consultation with the Senior Coordinator for Gender
13 Equality and Women’s Empowerment and the Senior Co-
14 ordinator for International Basic Education Assistance at
15 the United States Agency for International Development,
16 shall—

17 (1) review and update a United States global
18 strategy to empower adolescent girls, which includes
19 a focus on girl’s access to quality, inclusive sec-
20 ondary education, and subsequent agency implemen-
21 tation plans;

22 (2) provide a meaningful opportunity for review
23 and civil society consultation on the strategy and
24 agency implementation plans; and

1 (3) submit the updated strategy to the appro-
2 priate congressional committees.

3 (b) CONSULTATION REQUIRED.—In reviewing and
4 updating the strategy and implementation plans under
5 subsection (a), the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Wom-
6 en’s Issues, the Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality
7 and Women’s Empowerment, and the Senior Coordinator
8 for International Basic Education Assistance shall consult
9 with—

10 (1) the heads of relevant Federal departments
11 and agencies (or their designees);

12 (2) the appropriate congressional committees;
13 and

14 (3) representatives of United States civil society
15 and multilateral organizations with demonstrated ex-
16 perience and expertise in empowering adolescent
17 girls and promoting gender equality, including local
18 civil society organizations, faith-based organizations,
19 and program participants where possible.

20 **SEC. 7. TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING TO CONGRESS.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the
22 date of the enactment of this Act, and biennially thereafter
23 for 10 years until each activity initiated pursuant to the
24 authorities under this Act has concluded, the Adminis-
25 trator of the United States Agency for International De-

1 velopment, in coordination with the Secretary of State,
2 shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees
3 a report describing—

4 (1) the activities initiated under the authorities
5 provided in this Act; and

6 (2) the manner and extent to which such activi-
7 ties are monitored and evaluated, in accordance with
8 section 5(e).

9 (b) AVAILABILITY.—The report required by sub-
10 section (a) shall be made available on a text-based, search-
11 able, and publicly available website of the United States
12 Agency for International Development.

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