

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 299

To establish a competitive grant program to support the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of youth mentoring programs for eligible youth, and to provide for social and emotional learning, employability skill development, career exploration, work-based learning, and other youth workforce opportunities.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 29, 2025

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

A BILL

To establish a competitive grant program to support the establishment, expansion, or enhancement of youth mentoring programs for eligible youth, and to provide for social and emotional learning, employability skill development, career exploration, work-based learning, and other youth workforce opportunities.

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 “Mentoring to Succeed
5 Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle D of title I of the Work-
3 force Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3221 et
4 seq.) is amended—

5 (1) by redesignating section 172 as section 173;

6 and

7 (2) by inserting after section 171 the following:

8 **“SEC. 172. YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMS.**

9 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to
10 make assistance available for mentoring programs for eli-
11 gible youth, in order to—

12 “(1) establish, expand, or support mentoring
13 programs;

14 “(2) assist eligible youth enrolled in secondary
15 schools in developing cognitive and social-emotional
16 skills; and

17 “(3) prepare eligible youth for success in high
18 school, postsecondary education, and the workforce.

19 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20 “(1) COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION.—The
21 term ‘community-based organization’ means a youth-
22 serving private nonprofit organization (which may
23 include a faith-based organization or may be an af-
24 filiate of a national organization) that—

25 “(A) is representative of a community or a
26 significant segment of a community;

1 “(B) has demonstrated expertise and effec-
 2 tiveness in workforce development; and

3 “(C) has demonstrated expertise—

4 “(i) in the planning and delivery of
 5 education, training, and related activities
 6 that are included in a career pathway;

7 “(ii) in forging coordination and co-
 8 operation between educators and other
 9 members of the community; and

10 “(iii) in development and implementa-
 11 tion of data systems that measure the
 12 progress of students and outcomes of ca-
 13 reer pathways.

14 “(2) COVERED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-
 15 CATION.—The term ‘covered institution of higher
 16 education’ means—

17 “(A) an institution of higher education, as
 18 defined in section 101 of the Higher Education
 19 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001); or

20 “(B) a postsecondary vocational institu-
 21 tion, as defined in section 102(c) of such Act
 22 (20 U.S.C. 1002(c)).

23 “(3) COVERED PARTNERSHIP.—The term ‘cov-
 24 ered partnership’ means a partnership between—

25 “(A) a community-based organization; and

1 “(B)(i) an industry or sector partnership;

2 “(ii) a local educational agency; or

3 “(iii) another public entity or private

4 employer, as appropriate.

5 “(4) COVERED RECOGNIZED POSTSECONDARY

6 CREDENTIAL.—The term ‘covered recognized post-

7 secondary credential’ means a recognized postsec-

8 ondary credential issued by a covered institution of

9 higher education.

10 “(5) DISABILITY.—The term ‘disability’ has the

11 meaning given the term for purposes of section

12 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education

13 Act (20 U.S.C. 1401(3)).

14 “(6) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-

15 tity’ means a community-based organization or cov-

16 ered partnership that—

17 “(A) provides mentoring services; and

18 “(B) provides youth workforce readiness

19 programming and career exploration.

20 “(7) ELIGIBLE YOUTH.—The term ‘eligible

21 youth’ means—

22 “(A) an in-school youth;

23 “(B) a youth who meets all requirements

24 to be an in-school youth, except that—

1 “(i) in lieu of meeting the require-
2 ments of section 129(a)(1)(C)(ii), the
3 youth is in secondary school; or

4 “(ii) in lieu of meeting the require-
5 ments of section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv), the
6 youth—

7 “(I) is failing academically or at
8 risk of dropping out of school, is
9 chronically absent, is enrolled in fewer
10 classes or for fewer credit hours than
11 a typical full-time student, has
12 changed schools 3 or more times in
13 the past 180 days, or has a history of
14 multiple suspensions; or

15 “(II)(aa) is a gang member or
16 resides in a community with high
17 rates of, and prevalence of risk factors
18 associated with, violence-related inju-
19 ries and deaths, and with other rel-
20 evant health and safety risks (includ-
21 ing high rates of poverty, suicide, or
22 substance use disorder (including
23 opioid use disorder)) or has a parent
24 or guardian who is struggling with
25 substance use disorder;

1 “(bb) has 1 or both parents in-
 2 carcerated; or

3 “(cc) has experienced 1 or more
 4 adverse childhood experiences, trau-
 5 matic events, or toxic stressors, as as-
 6 sessed through an evidence-based
 7 screening;

8 “(C) an out-of-school youth; or

9 “(D) a youth who meets all requirements
 10 to be an out-of-school youth, except that—

11 “(i) in lieu of meeting the require-
 12 ments of section 129(a)(1)(B)(ii), the
 13 youth would be placed in secondary school
 14 if the youth were attending school; or

15 “(ii) in lieu of meeting the require-
 16 ments of section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii), the
 17 youth is described in subparagraph
 18 (B)(ii)(II).

19 “(8) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’
 20 means a structured, managed activity—

21 “(A) in which eligible youth are appro-
 22 priately matched with screened and trained
 23 adult or peer volunteer mentors for consistent
 24 relationships;

1 “(B) that provides direct one-on-one,
 2 group, or peer mentoring services that focus
 3 on—

4 “(i) providing enrichment;

5 “(ii) promoting educational or work-
 6 force success;

7 “(iii) minimizing risk behaviors;

8 “(iv) promoting social skills and
 9 healthy relationships; or

10 “(v) any combination of objectives de-
 11 scribed in clauses (i) through (iv);

12 “(C) that involves meetings, events, and
 13 activities on a regular basis, for a period of not
 14 less than 1 year; and

15 “(D) that is intended to meet, in part, the
 16 social and emotional development needs of an
 17 eligible youth, the need of the eligible youth for
 18 involvement with a caring and supportive adult,
 19 and the need of the eligible youth for positive
 20 role models, connections, and stability.

21 “(9) HIGH SCHOOL.—The term ‘high school’
 22 has the meaning given the term in section 8101 of
 23 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
 24 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

1 “(10) YOUTH WORKFORCE READINESS PRO-
 2 GRAMMING.—The term ‘youth workforce readiness
 3 programming’ means job training, or a workforce
 4 development program providing an employment and
 5 training activity, such as mentoring, an activity to
 6 promote communication and problem-solving skills,
 7 career exploration, a job readiness activity and cer-
 8 tification, a summer job, or a year-round job oppor-
 9 tunity or apprenticeship, provided to eligible youth.

10 “(c) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made avail-
 12 able for this section, the Secretary shall award
 13 grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to
 14 establish, expand, or support mentoring programs in
 15 accordance with subsection (d).

16 “(2) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this
 17 section shall be for a period not to exceed 3 years.

18 “(d) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—

19 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity receiving
 20 a grant under this section shall use grant funds to
 21 establish, expand, or support not less than 1 men-
 22 toring program that—

23 “(A) is designed to assist eligible youth in
 24 developing cognitive and social-emotional skills
 25 to prepare the eligible youth for success in high

1 school, postsecondary education, and the work-
2 force by linking the eligible youth with mentors
3 who—

4 “(i) have received mentor training, in-
5 cluding training on trauma-informed prac-
6 tices, youth engagement, cultural com-
7 petency, and social-emotional learning; and

8 “(ii) have been screened using appro-
9 priate reference checks and criminal back-
10 ground checks, in accordance with the re-
11 quirements of subsection (e)(2)(F)(ii);

12 “(B) serves a population that includes eli-
13 gible youth living in or from underserved com-
14 munities or communities with employment dis-
15 parities;

16 “(C) provides coaching and technical as-
17 sistance to mentors participating in the men-
18 toring program;

19 “(D) seeks to—

20 “(i) reduce juvenile justice involve-
21 ment of eligible youth;

22 “(ii) foster positive relationships be-
23 tween eligible youth and their peers, other
24 adults, and family members;

1 “(iii) develop the workforce readiness
 2 skills of eligible youth by exploring paths
 3 to employment, including encouraging stu-
 4 dents with disabilities to explore transition
 5 services; and

6 “(iv) increase the participation of eli-
 7 gible youth in community service activities;

8 “(E) encourages eligible youth to set goals
 9 and plan for their futures, including making
 10 plans and identifying goals for postsecondary
 11 education and participation in the workforce;

12 “(F) develops and carries out regular
 13 training for mentors, including training on—

14 “(i) the impact of adverse childhood
 15 experiences;

16 “(ii) trauma-informed practices and
 17 interventions;

18 “(iii) cultural competency;

19 “(iv) social and emotional learning;

20 “(v) positive youth development and
 21 engagement practices; and

22 “(vi) disability inclusion practices to
 23 ensure access and participation by students
 24 with disabilities;

1 “(G) works in coordination with a private
2 employer and a local educational agency with
3 not less than 1 high-need school (as defined in
4 section 2211(b) of the Elementary and Sec-
5 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
6 6631(b));

7 “(H) recruits, screens, matches, trains,
8 and, as necessary, compensates mentors;

9 “(I) hires staff, as necessary, to perform or
10 support the objectives of the program; and

11 “(J) provides inclusive and accessible
12 youth engagement activities, such as—

13 “(i) career awareness activities, in-
14 cluding job site visits, informational inter-
15 views, resume writing, interview prepara-
16 tion, and networking;

17 “(ii) academic or postsecondary edu-
18 cation preparation activities, including
19 trade or vocational school visits, visits to
20 institutions of higher education, and assist-
21 ance in applying to institutions of higher
22 education;

23 “(iii) support for the use of career
24 pathways;

1 “(iv) paid and unpaid work experi-
2 ences that have as a component academic
3 and occupational education, which may in-
4 clude—

5 “(I) paid employment opportuni-
6 ties;

7 “(II) pre-apprenticeship pro-
8 grams and apprenticeship programs;

9 “(III) paid internships;

10 “(IV) job shadowing; and

11 “(V) on-the-job training opportu-
12 nities;

13 “(v) work-based learning (as defined
14 in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Career
15 and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20
16 U.S.C. 2302)) that provides opportunities
17 for the application of employability skills
18 and hands-on work experiences through
19 partnerships among eligible entities;

20 “(vi) occupational skill training, which
21 shall include priority consideration for
22 training programs that lead to covered rec-
23 ognized postsecondary credentials that are
24 aligned with in-demand industry sectors or
25 occupations in the local area involved, if

1 the local board determines that the pro-
2 grams meet the quality criteria described
3 in section 123(a);

4 “(vii) activities that help youth pre-
5 pare for and transition to postsecondary
6 education and training; and

7 “(viii) services to help prepare eligible
8 youth for the workforce, such as—

9 “(I) leadership development op-
10 portunities;

11 “(II) workforce or workforce
12 readiness opportunities;

13 “(III) financial literacy edu-
14 cation;

15 “(IV) entrepreneurial skills train-
16 ing;

17 “(V) services that provide labor
18 market and employment information
19 about in-demand industry sectors or
20 occupations available in the local area;

21 “(VI) activities to develop funda-
22 mental workforce readiness skills or to
23 develop employability skills (such as
24 communication, creativity, collabora-
25 tion, and critical thinking) that sup-

1 port social-emotional development
2 through every developmental stage;
3 and

4 “(VII) career exposure offered by
5 local industry or sector partnerships
6 to provide career assessments, edu-
7 cation, and career planning.

8 “(2) ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES.—An eligible enti-
9 ty receiving a grant under this section may use
10 grant funds to—

11 “(A) provide professional development (as
12 defined in section 3 of the Carl D. Perkins Ca-
13 reer and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20
14 U.S.C. 2302)) for training educators and other
15 providers of educational services who partici-
16 pate in the mentoring program;

17 “(B) develop assets and resources that as-
18 sist an employer or groups of employers or sec-
19 tors in working with eligible youth;

20 “(C) in the case of an eligible entity that
21 seeks to implement the program through a
22 partnership with another eligible entity, estab-
23 lish the partnership; and

1 “(D) conduct program evaluation, includ-
2 ing acquiring and analyzing the data described
3 in subsection (g).

4 “(3) SUBGRANTS.—An eligible entity receiving
5 a grant under this section may, with the approval of
6 the Secretary, use grant funds to award subgrants
7 to eligible organizations to carry out activities de-
8 scribed in paragraphs (1) and (2).

9 “(e) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity desiring a
10 grant under this section shall submit an application to the
11 Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied
12 by such information as the Secretary may require, includ-
13 ing—

14 “(1) a needs assessment that includes baseline
15 data on the measures described in subsection
16 (g)(1)(B); and

17 “(2) a plan to establish, expand, or support a
18 mentoring program that meets the requirements of
19 subsection (d)(1), including—

20 “(A) the targeted outcomes, mentor type,
21 and meeting frequency for the program;

22 “(B) a description of and data regarding
23 the eligible youth who will participate as
24 mentees in the program, including—

1 “(i) any age ranges to be served or
2 any other eligibility criteria; and

3 “(ii) how the eligible entity will ensure
4 that the program serves eligible youth liv-
5 ing in or from underserved communities or
6 communities with employment disparities,
7 in accordance with subsection (d)(1)(B);

8 “(C) the number of mentor-mentee
9 matches proposed to be established and main-
10 tained annually under the program;

11 “(D) the capacity and expertise of the pro-
12 gram to serve eligible youth in a way that is re-
13 sponsive to children and youth of color, expect-
14 ant and parenting youth, indigenous youth,
15 youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual,
16 transgender, or queer, and youth with disabil-
17 ities;

18 “(E) actions taken to ensure that the de-
19 sign of the program reflects input from eligible
20 youth;

21 “(F) an assurance that mentors supported
22 under the program are appropriately screened
23 and have demonstrated a willingness to comply
24 with aspects of the mentoring program, includ-
25 ing—

1 “(i) a written screening plan that in-
2 cludes all of the policies and procedures
3 used to screen and select mentors, includ-
4 ing eligibility requirements and preferences
5 for such applicants;

6 “(ii) a description of the methods to
7 be used to conduct criminal background
8 checks on all prospective mentors and the
9 methods in place to exclude mentors with
10 convictions directly related to child safety
11 that occur during the mentor’s participa-
12 tion in the program or in the 7-year period
13 preceding the mentor’s participation; and

14 “(iii) a description of the methods to
15 be used to ensure that the mentors are
16 willing and able to serve as a mentor on a
17 long-term, consistent basis as defined in
18 the application;

19 “(G) a description of—

20 “(i) the community-based organiza-
21 tions or the covered partnerships through
22 which the eligible entity will implement the
23 program; and

24 “(ii) if a covered partnership will as-
25 sist in implementing the program, the col-

1 laboration and coordination that the com-
 2 munity-based organization in the partner-
 3 ship has carried out or will carry out with
 4 other entities in the partnership, related to
 5 that implementation;

6 “(H) in the case of a program that in-
 7 cludes an opportunity to earn a covered recog-
 8 nized postsecondary credential, a description of
 9 the activities leading to the covered recognized
 10 postsecondary credential; and

11 “(I) a budget detailing program activities
 12 and administrative costs.

13 “(f) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this sec-
 14 tion, the Secretary shall give priority to eligible entities
 15 that—

16 “(1) prior to receiving a grant, serve eligible
 17 youth with the greatest need who reside in—

18 “(A) a high-poverty community;

19 “(B) a rural area; or

20 “(C) a community with high rates of, and
 21 prevalence of risk factors associated with, vio-
 22 lence-related injuries and deaths, and with
 23 other relevant health and safety risks (including
 24 high rates of poverty, suicide, or substance use
 25 disorder (including opioid use disorder));

1 “(2) provide eligible youth participating in the
2 mentoring program supported under this section
3 with opportunities for postsecondary education prep-
4 aration and career development, including—

5 “(A) job training, professional develop-
6 ment, work shadowing, internships, networking,
7 resume writing and review, interview prepara-
8 tion, transition or vocational rehabilitation serv-
9 ices for students with disabilities, application
10 assistance and visits to institutions of higher
11 education, and leadership development through
12 community service, and relevant program ele-
13 ments described in section 129(c)(2)); and

14 “(B) partnerships with the private sector
15 and local businesses to provide internship and
16 career exploration activities and resources; and

17 “(3) consult and engage eligible youth in the
18 development, design, and implementation of the
19 mentoring program, including by demonstrating
20 such consultation and engagement in the application
21 submitted under subsection (e) and agreeing to con-
22 tinue such consultation after receiving the grant.

23 “(g) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
25 after the end of each year of the grant period, an

1 eligible entity receiving a grant under this section
2 shall submit to the Secretary a report that—

3 “(A) includes—

4 “(i) the number of eligible youth and
5 mentors, and the demographics of eligible
6 youth and mentors, who participated in the
7 mentoring program that was supported
8 with grant funds;

9 “(ii) data on the academic achieve-
10 ment, dropout rates, truancy, absenteeism,
11 outcomes of arrests for violent crime, full-
12 time employment, part-time employment,
13 and postsecondary education enrollment of
14 eligible youth participating in the program;
15 and

16 “(iii) data on social-emotional develop-
17 ment of eligible youth participating in the
18 program, as assessed with a validated so-
19 cial-emotional assessment tool;

20 “(B) may include indicators such as
21 achievement of career competencies, or success-
22 ful completion of internships, apprenticeships,
23 or work-based learning opportunities, or high
24 school graduation; and

1 “(C) includes any other information that
2 the Secretary may require to evaluate the suc-
3 cess of the mentoring program.

4 “(2) STUDENT PRIVACY.—An eligible entity
5 shall ensure that the report submitted under para-
6 graph (1) is prepared in a manner that protects the
7 privacy rights of each eligible youth in the same
8 manner as is required for students under section
9 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20
10 U.S.C. 1232g; commonly known as the ‘Family Edu-
11 cational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974’).

12 “(h) MENTORING PROGRAM RESOURCES AND TECH-
13 NICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall work with the
14 Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delin-
15 quency Prevention and the Secretary of Education to—

16 “(1) refer eligible entities receiving grants
17 under this section to the National Mentoring Re-
18 source Center to obtain resources on best practices
19 and research related to mentoring programs and to
20 request no-cost training and technical assistance;
21 and

22 “(2) provide such eligible entities with informa-
23 tion regarding transitional services for eligible youth
24 returning from correctional facilities and transition
25 services for students with disabilities.

1 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
 3 such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years
 4 2026 through 2030.”.

5 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
 6 in section 1(b) of the Workforce Innovation and Oppor-
 7 tunity Act is amended by striking the item relating to sec-
 8 tion 172 and inserting the following:

“Sec. 172. Youth mentoring programs.

“Sec. 173. Authorization of appropriations.”.

9 **SEC. 3. STUDY ON MENTORING PROGRAMS.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Labor, acting
 11 through the Chief Evaluation Officer of the Department
 12 of Labor, shall conduct a study to—

13 (1) identify successful mentoring programs and
 14 evidence-based strategies for administering and mon-
 15 itoring such programs;

16 (2) evaluate the role of mentors in promoting
 17 cognitive development and social-emotional learning
 18 to enhance academic achievement and to improve
 19 workforce readiness; and

20 (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the grant pro-
 21 gram under section 172 of the Workforce Innovation
 22 and Opportunity Act, as added by section 2, on stu-
 23 dent academic outcomes and youth career develop-
 24 ment.

1 (b) TIMING.—Not later than 3 years after the date
2 of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor, acting
3 through the Chief Evaluation Officer, shall submit the re-
4 sults of the study to the appropriate congressional com-
5 mittees.

○