

Education Act. This important piece of legislation will encourage younger generations to pursue CTE careers, knowing they will have support on the back end to help find a job.

Costly 4-year degrees create burdensome financial obligations and saddle students with decades of debt. It is important individuals have alternatives, such as CTE programs, when wanting to find meaningful careers at a fraction of the cost.

Skilled labor has become a high-demand market, and our country is in need of more plumbers, electricians, welders, and other skilled professionals who are the lifeblood of our economy. This growing skills gap is hurting small businesses across the country.

My bill will fill that void and connect graduates to high-demand occupations and opportunities that earn good wages and will help them provide for their family. Additionally, this bill provides valuable assistance so CTE graduates can translate their skills over to starting their own small business and help build long-term careers and employ more people.

I have been a small business owner for over 50 years, and I can tell you that leading sales meetings, signing the fronts of checks, and giving other people the opportunity to make a living is one of the most rewarding things, if not the most rewarding, I have ever done.

The American Dream is built on innovation and entrepreneurship, and this only continues when the next generation is willing to better themselves, be empowered to take risks, and understand that risk-reward is the dream.

It is our responsibility to unlock the potential of our next generation so we can keep America the greatest nation in the world and keep it strong.

I thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and Ranking Member LUETKEMEYER for helping to get this bill to the floor. I urge all my colleagues to vote in support of H.R. 7664.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Madam Speaker, small businesses and the American worker are the backbone of our economy. By empowering the SBA's resource partners, including small business development centers and women's business centers, to engage with the career and technical education community, we will replenish our skilled workforce and grow our economy.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 7664, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Madam Speaker, while our economy continues to recover and job openings

increase, it is important that we ensure there is an adequate pipeline of skilled workers in our small firms.

Fueling our economic recovery relies on them having the resources they need to thrive, including an adequate workforce. H.R. 7664 will go a long way in connecting small employers in need of workers to these programs and connect students to opportunities of launching their own firms.

I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. NEWMAN) for their hard work on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7664, the "Supporting Small Business and Career and Technical Education Act of 2022."

This bill would amend the Small Business Act to include requirements relating to graduates of career and technical education programs, and programs of study for small business development centers and women's business centers.

H.R. 7664 would assist small businesses in hiring graduates from career and technical education programs, and would assist graduates of these programs in starting up a small business.

Small businesses are the engine of our economy, creating two-thirds of the new jobs over the last 15 years, accounting for 44 percent of U.S. economic activity.

According to the U.S. Small Business Association (SBA), small businesses of 500 employees or fewer make up 99.9 percent of all U.S. businesses and 99.7 percent of firms with paid employees.

Not only do small businesses provide millions of jobs, they also advance careers and opportunities.

Successful small businesses put money back into their local community through paychecks and taxes, which can support the creation of new small businesses and improve local public services.

Small business is the portal through which many people enter the economic mainstream.

Business ownership allows individuals, including women and minorities, to achieve financial success, as well as bolster pride in their accomplishments.

While most small businesses are still owned by white males, the past two decades have seen a substantial increase in the number of businesses owned by women and minorities.

The more we create opportunities for career growth and development from a wide array of diverse backgrounds, the more opportunities we create for ourselves and our economy.

A critical workforce challenge currently in the United States is the skills gap, particularly among jobs that require either a high school diploma, postsecondary certificate, or associate's degree.

Jobs requiring these "middle skills" outnumber the adults in the workforce who possess them, and this gap presents a barrier to American economic competitiveness.

Due to global shifts in technology, automation and other sectors that had been occurring long before the pandemic, employers were raising alarms over a growing number of vital skills they noticed to be in short supply from incoming applicants.

Graduates from career and technical education (CTE) programs are perfectly suited to fill this gap.

CTE programs help students see the relevance of their studies for their future and motivates them to attend classes and study hard.

In 2019–20 there were 11.1 million CTE participants; 7.6 million at the secondary level and 3.5 million at the postsecondary level.

According to the Texas Education Agency's 2016–2017 Academic Excellence Indicator System State Profile Report, 1,523,779 secondary students in Texas (46.3 percent) were enrolled in Career and Technical Education programs.

We must make sure our legislation reflects the importance and value of small business, CTE program graduates, and the role they will play in growing our economy.

I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 7664, the Supporting Small Business and Career and Technical Education Act of 2022.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7664.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROY. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

WOMEN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM TRANSPARENCY ACT

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7670) to amend the Small Business Act to require a report on small business concerns owned and controlled by women, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7670

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act" or the "WOSB Program Transparency Act".

SEC. 2. REPORT ON SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(9) REPORT.—Not later than May 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a report on small business concerns owned and controlled by women. Such report shall include, for the fiscal year preceding the date of the report, the following:

"(A) The total number of concerns certified as small business concerns owned and

controlled by women, disaggregated by the number of concerns certified by—

“(i) the Administrator; or
“(ii) a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator.

“(B) The amount of fees, if any, charged by each national certifying entity for such certification.

“(C) The total dollar amount and total percentage of prime contracts awarded to small business concerns owned and controlled by women pursuant to paragraph (2) or pursuant to a waiver granted under paragraph (3).

“(D) The total dollar amount and total percentage of prime contracts awarded to small business concerns owned and controlled by women pursuant to paragraphs (7) and (8).

“(E) With respect to a contract incorrectly awarded pursuant to this subsection because it was awarded based on an industry in which small business concerns owned and controlled by women are not underrepresented—

“(i) the number of such contracts;
“(ii) the Federal agencies that issued such contracts; and

“(iii) any steps taken by Administrator to train the personnel of such Federal agency on the use of the authority provided under this subsection.

“(F) With respect to an examination described in paragraph (5)(B)—

“(i) the number of examinations due because of recertification requirements and the actual number of such examinations conducted; and

“(ii) the number of examinations conducted for any other reason.

“(G) The number of small business concerns owned and controlled by women that were found to be ineligible to be awarded a contract under this subsection as a result of an examination conducted pursuant to paragraph (5)(B) or failure to request an examination pursuant to section 127.400 of title 13, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor rule).

“(H) The number of small business concerns owned and controlled by women that were decertified.

“(I) Other information the Administrator determines necessary.”

(b) **TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.**—Section 8(m)(2)(C) of the Small Business Act is amended by striking “paragraph (3)” and inserting “paragraph (4)”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 7670, the Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act.

The Women-Owned Small Business program levels the playing field for female entrepreneurs who compete for

Federal contracts. Additionally, it assists agencies in meeting the goal of awarding 5 percent of all contracts to women-owned small businesses.

While the program has steadily improved, it has faced its fair share of delays and challenges. For example, the program started operating 10 years after its enactment, and since its implementation 12 years ago, the 5 percent goal has only been met twice.

The Small Business Administration implemented a formal certification process for the program in 2020, more than 5 years after being required to do so by Congress. As a result, while the agency is making great strides, it still has a substantial backlog of applications and the implementation of corresponding regulations—especially when it comes to program examinations—remains to be seen.

The importance of the program to elevating women-owned small businesses in the Federal procurement arena makes it imperative to conduct oversight to ensure the program is meeting its legislative intent. H.R. 7670 will aid Congress in this endeavor by establishing reporting requirements to better assess the effectiveness of the program.

In particular, H.R. 7670 requires the SBA to report on multiple facets of the Women-Owned Small Business program, including the amount of contracting dollars awarded through the program, the number of certifications issued, the amount of program examinations conducted, and much more.

I thank the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for their bipartisan work on this bill. H.R. 7670 is a commonsense piece of legislation that will bring transparency and accountability to the Women-Owned Small Business program.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 7670, the Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act.

Federal programs, and especially Federal contracting programs, require comprehensive and complete reporting requirements from executive branch agencies. This information ensures that not only the programs are meeting congressional intent but also to ensure that safeguards and oversight capabilities are intact.

H.R. 7670 bolsters the Women-Owned Small Business program by enhancing the program's reporting requirements. Having more information on how many women-owned small businesses are certified and the amount of fees charged by third-party certifiers will only strengthen the program.

I thank the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY)

for working in a bipartisan manner to address the Women-Owned Small Business program. I also again would like to thank the chair for advancing this bill.

H.R. 7670 is a good government bill that will provide more information about one of the SBA's Federal contracting programs.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN).

Ms. HOULAHAN. Madam Speaker, I proudly rise today to urge my colleagues to vote for my straightforward, bipartisan bill that supports our Nation's female entrepreneurs. It is called the Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act.

As an engineer myself, and an entrepreneur and operator, I know very much firsthand that data can help us to address and understand some of our most pressing issues in business. Here is what the data says: Year after year, women-owned small businesses continue to be underrepresented when it comes to Federal contract funding. In other words, the playing field isn't nearly level.

The good news is that there is already an initiative that is designed to address this. It is called the Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contracting Program. This program is popular and necessary to bridge the disparity in Federal contracts, but it needs some additional improvements.

My bill will do just that by increasing transparency, oversight, and accountability. Through this program, the SBA aids other Federal agencies in meeting the statutory goal of awarding 5 percent of Federal contracts to women-owned businesses, a goal which the chairwoman mentioned has only been met twice in history.

The program has experienced challenges, including a significant backlog of applications and poor visibility of the approval numbers by national certifying entities. Our bipartisan bill will address these concerns by requiring the SBA to share six critical pieces of information:

One, the amount of contracting dollars that are awarded.

Two, the number of certifications that are issued.

Three, the amount of program examinations that are conducted.

Four, the number of companies that are decertified.

Five, the number of contracts that are incorrectly awarded.

Simply put, this bill will allow Congress and the SBA to work together to help women secure government contracts, especially those in underrepresented industries, which include the signature crop of our region, the mushroom industry, and also include underrepresented industries such as the dairy product manufacturing industry, which is represented by ByHeart, the only baby formula manufacturer that

has been started in the last 15 years, that also happens to be in my district.

The time is now for us to act, both as our female businessowners continue to recover from the pandemic and as additional contracts are issued through the historic implementation of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and fellow entrepreneur from across the aisle, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for her partnership on this bill that will help level the playing field for all female entrepreneurs across our country.

I also thank and extend my thanks to Chair VELÁZQUEZ and Ranking Member LUETKEMEYER.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Underserved, Agriculture, and Rural Business Development.

Ms. TENNEY. Madam Speaker, I am honored to partner with the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) to introduce the bipartisan Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act. In 2014 and 2019, the Government Accountability Office found that the Women-Owned Small Business program has several oversight deficiencies and needs to release more in-depth performance metrics to ensure it addresses the needs of women-owned small businesses and the taxpayer.

This legislation today addresses these concerns, requiring the Small Business Administration to annually disclose the total number of businesses that are certified as women-owned by the SBA, the number certified by third-party certifiers, and fees charged by third-party certifiers, the dollar amount and percent of contracts to women-owned small businesses, and the information on contracts incorrectly awarded.

For over two decades, the Women-Owned Small Business program has set aside at least 5 percent Federal contracting dollars for certified women-owned small businesses. This plays a small, but important, part of ensuring that the Federal Government does not leave our Nation's small businesses behind and that we continue to have a robust and competitive contractor ecosystem to pull from.

In New York's 22nd Congressional District, small businesses make up 94 percent of all employers, and I have witnessed firsthand the tremendous impact of women-owned small businesses. In fact, my own family business is a women-owned business. Whether it is Curcio Printing in the Southern Tier or AeroMed Technologies in Utica, our communities and, yes, our taxpayers benefit when women-owned businesses thrive.

With these additional metrics available to policymakers, it will pave the way for future improvements to the

Women-Owned Small Business program. Only through full transparency can we ensure that this program works effectively and efficiently for small businesses and for taxpayers.

I thank, again, my partner and colleague, the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN), for cosponsoring this great piece of bipartisan legislation, and I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this.

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Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, it is important for Congress to study all of the Small Business Administration's Federal contracting programs regularly.

H.R. 7670, the Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act, will enhance our research and assist us as we examine this program. The more information that we have at our fingertips, simply the better.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, long after the enactment of the legislation to create the Women-Owned Small Business Program, women still face inequities when it comes to Federal contracting. The Women-Owned Small Business Program tries to address these inequities.

Today, we have the opportunity to further this mission through H.R. 7670. This bill creates a reporting requirement through which to measure whether the program is working as intended. I am certain that this oversight mechanism will lead to increased transparency, accountability, and efficiency to the benefit of our women-owned small business community. That is why I thank our committee members for their leadership in advancing this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 7670, the "Women-Owned Small Business Program Transparency Act."

H.R. 7670 is a bipartisan effort to amend the Small Business Act to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA) to submit to Congress a report on small businesses owned and controlled by women including:

Information as to the amount of contracting dollars awarded through the program,

The number of certifications being issued,

The amount of program examinations being conducted,

The number of companies being decertified, and

The number of contracts incorrectly awarded to industries within the North American In-

dustry Classification System or NAICS codes ineligible for the program, as well as any actions taken by SBA to properly train agency personnel.

The SBA's report to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate will equip Congress with transparency into the effectiveness of the program that will enable future improvements to the program.

Established in 2000, the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program leveled the playing field by providing an opportunity for women-owned small businesses to attain federal contracts in industries where the SBA had determined that women entrepreneurs were underrepresented.

Unfortunately, due to administrative neglect in the application review and the application backlog from eligible businesses, many women were shut out from attaining contracts.

Following the U.S. Government Accountability Office's investigation into this matter, they concluded that "By not improving its oversight of the WOSB program, SBA is limiting its ability to ensure third-party certifiers are following program requirements", meaning that several contracts that WOSBs had applied for were inaccessible to women.

When enacted, H.R. 7670 will reform the oversight of the WOSB program to ensure that transparency and accountability are high priorities during the contract distribution process.

I applaud the efforts of my colleagues Rep. CHRISSY HOULAHAN and Rep. CLAUDIA TENNEY for elevating the voices of all female entrepreneurs across America, including over 125,000 female small business owners from Houston.

There has been a long history of women-owned small businesses being excluded from consideration for federal contracts and participation in subcontracting. The progress that women-owned small businesses had made was curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that lost ground must be reversed so that women-owned businesses are able to remain competitive.

Now more than ever, it is critical for Congress to stand with America's small business owners to whom we owe a great deal for our economic prosperity.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 7670.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7670.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROY. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

STRENGTHENING SUBCONTRACTING FOR SMALL BUSINESSES ACT OF 2022

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the