

# Increased Student Achievement through Increased Student Support Act

HR 1361 / S 538

111<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session

Sponsors: Rep. Towns (NY), Senator Lincoln (AR)

## Purpose of this Bill:

The five primary objectives of this program are to:

1. Support students who are at risk of negative educational outcomes;
2. Improve student achievement in such areas;
3. Improve recruitment and retention of school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers working in such areas;
4. Improve the retention of teachers who are highly qualified in such areas;
5. Improve working conditions for all school personnel in such areas.

## Description of Program:

This bill creates a federal grant program designed to increase the number of school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers serving low-income local educational agencies (LEAs). Low-income local educational agencies are defined as (a) an LEA in which not less than 20% of the students served by the agency are from families with incomes below the poverty line; (b) LEAs with existing ratios of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists to students which fall at least 10 percent below the student support personnel target ratios, meaning no such low income LEA has no more than one counselor per 277 students, no more than one school psychologist per 1111 students, and no more than one social worker per 444 students; (c) LEAs that have been identified for improvement or corrective action that include at least one school that has been identified for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Institutions of higher education with graduate training programs in school counseling, school psychology, and school social work that develop collaborative training and placement partnerships with low-income LEAs are eligible to apply for grant funding. Grant funding for this program builds the capacity of graduate training universities and local school districts to collaboratively train, recruit, employ and retain school psychologists, counselors, and social workers for service in high need, low-income rural and urban schools.

## Need for the Program:

The following findings establish the need for this program:

- Research shows that socioeconomic status and family background characteristics are highly correlated with educational outcomes, with a concentration of low-performing schools in low-income and under-served communities.
- Teachers cite poor working conditions, student behavior, lack of student motivation, and lack of administrative support as key reasons why they choose to leave the teaching profession.
- Teachers working for low-income school districts are increasingly tasked with addressing not only the academic needs of a child, but also the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of a child that require the services of a school counselor, school social worker, and school psychologist, and these needs often interfere with delivering quality instruction and raising student achievement.
- Rates of abuse and neglect of young children in military families have doubled with the increased military involvement of the United States abroad since October 2002; likewise, adolescents with deployed parents report increased perceptions of uncertainty and loss, role ambiguity, negative changes in mental health, and increased relationship conflict, raising concerns about the impact of deployment on military personnel and their families and whether schools that serve a large number of children with deployed parents have sufficient staff and expertise to meet these challenges.
- Children of military families in rural areas are often geographically isolated, and schools that were already experiencing shortages of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists face even greater challenges meeting the increased needs of students enduring the stress that comes along with having a deployed parent or parents.

- Schools in areas served by low-income school districts suffer disproportionately from a lack of services, with many schools either sharing a single school counselor, school social worker, or school psychologist with neighboring schools or not having any such personnel at all.
- Too few school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists per student means that such personnel are often unable to effectively address the needs of students.

**Who is eligible to apply and what is the length of the grant period?**

Eligible grant recipients include a higher educational institution in partnership with a low-income rural or urban local educational agency. Preference is given to universities partnering with LEAs that have high numbers of low income students; students not meeting academic proficiency; schools with fewer school psychologists, counselors and social workers than the industry standards; and universities with the greatest number of training programs in school psychology, counseling, and social work. A grant awarded under this program shall be for a 5 year period and may be renewed for a five year period as the Secretary determines is appropriate. 16.3% of funds are reserved for eligible partnerships between universities and rural low-income LEAs.

**What is the funding request and permissible uses of funds for this program?**

This program requests an appropriation of \$30 million for each of the fiscal years up until 2019. Grant funds awarded under this program may be used

1. To pay the administrative costs relating to having graduate students placed in schools to complete required field work, credit hours, internships, or related training.
2. To hire and pay participating graduates to work in schools served by participating low income local educational agencies.
3. To increase the number of school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists per student in schools to work towards the student support personnel target ratios
4. To recruit, hire, and pay faculty to train graduate students in the field of school counseling, school social work, and school psychology in participating eligible graduate institutions.
5. To provide tuition credits to graduate students participating in the grant program
6. For student loan forgiveness for participating graduates working in schools served by participating LEAs.

**Will the effectiveness of this program be evaluated?**

Five years after the enactment of this program the Secretary shall conduct a study to (1) determine the effectiveness of the grant program in carrying out the purpose of this Act; (2) compare the effectiveness of the various activities supported by grant funds. A report of program progress shall be submitted to Congress no later than 6 years after the date of enactment of this program.

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