

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To provide support for the development of middle school career exploration programs linked to career and technical education programs of study.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. CASEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WARNER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To provide support for the development of middle school career exploration programs linked to career and technical education programs of study.

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 “Middle School Tech-  
5 nical Education Program Act” or the “Middle School  
6 STEP Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Career and technical education prepares  
2 students to be college and career ready by providing  
3 core academic, technical, and employability skills.

4           (2) Eighty percent of students taking a college  
5 preparatory academic curriculum with rigorous ca-  
6 reer and technical education courses met college and  
7 career readiness goals, compared to 63 percent of  
8 students taking the same academic core who did not  
9 experience rigorous career and technical education  
10 courses.

11          (3) Students concentrating in career and tech-  
12 nical education improved their 12th grade National  
13 Assessment of Educational Progress scores by 8  
14 points in reading and 11 points in mathematics,  
15 while students who took no career and technical edu-  
16 cation courses did not increase their mathematics  
17 scores and only increased reading scores by 4 points.

18          (4) The average high school graduation rate in  
19 2012 for students concentrating in career and tech-  
20 nical education programs was 93 percent, compared  
21 to the average nationwide high school graduation  
22 rate of 80 percent.

23          (5) Partnerships between businesses and edu-  
24 cators help adults build academic, technical, and em-

1 ployability skills through education and on-the-job  
2 training.

3 **SEC. 3. PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS.**

4 (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to support  
5 the development of middle school career exploration pro-  
6 grams linked to career and technical education programs  
7 of study.

8 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

9 (1) CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION EX-  
10 PLORATION PROGRAM.—The term “career and tech-  
11 nical education exploration program” means a pro-  
12 gram that is developed through an organized, sys-  
13 temic framework and is designed to aid students in  
14 making informed plans and decisions about future  
15 education and career opportunities and enrollment in  
16 career and technical education programs of study.

17 (2) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—The term “eligi-  
18 ble partnership” means an entity that—

19 (A) shall include—

20 (i) not less than 1 local educational  
21 agency that receives funding under section  
22 131 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and  
23 Technical Education Act of 2006 (20  
24 U.S.C. 2351), or an area career and tech-

1            nical education school or educational serv-  
2            ice agency described in such section;

3            (ii) not less than 1 eligible institution  
4            that receives funding under section 132 of  
5            the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical  
6            Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2352);  
7            and

8            (iii) not less than 1 representative of  
9            either a local or regional business, indus-  
10          try, nonprofit organization, or apprentice-  
11          ship program; and

12          (B) may include other representatives of  
13          the community, including representatives of  
14          parents' organizations, labor organizations,  
15          nonprofit organizations, employers, and rep-  
16          resentatives of local workforce development  
17          boards (established under subtitle A of title I of  
18          the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity  
19          Act).

20          (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
21          the Secretary of Education.

22    **SEC. 4. CAREER EXPLORATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**  
23                                    **GRANTS.**

24          (a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary shall create a  
25          pilot program to support the establishment of career and

1 technical education exploration programs. In carrying out  
2 the pilot program, the Secretary shall award grants to eli-  
3 gible partnerships to enable the eligible partnerships to de-  
4 velop middle school career and technical education explo-  
5 ration programs that are aligned with career and technical  
6 education programs of study described in section  
7 122(c)(1)(A) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical  
8 Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2342(c)(1)(A)).

9 (b) GRANT DURATION.—Grants awarded under this  
10 Act shall be for a period of not more than 4 years.

11 (c) APPLICATION.—An eligible partnership seeking a  
12 grant under this section shall submit an application to the  
13 Secretary at such time and in such manner as the Sec-  
14 retary may require. Each application shall include—

15 (1) a description of the partner entities com-  
16 prising the eligible partnership, the roles and respon-  
17 sibilities of each partner, and a demonstration of  
18 each partner’s capacity to support the program;

19 (2) a description of how the eligible partnership  
20 will use grant funds to carry out each of the activi-  
21 ties described under subsection (e);

22 (3) a description of how the middle school ca-  
23 reer and technical education exploration program  
24 aligns to regional economies and local emerging  
25 workforce needs;

1           (4) a description of how the new middle school  
2 career and technical education exploration program  
3 is linked to—

4           (A) 1 or more career and technical edu-  
5 cation programs of study offered by the agency  
6 or school described in section 3(b)(2)(A)(i); and

7           (B) 1 or more career and technical edu-  
8 cation programs of study offered by the postsec-  
9 ondary institution described in section  
10 3(b)(2)(A)(ii);

11          (5) a description of the students that will be  
12 served by the middle school career and technical  
13 education exploration program;

14          (6) a description of how the middle school ca-  
15 reer and technical education exploration program  
16 funded by the grant will be replicable;

17          (7) a description of how the eligible partnership  
18 will disseminate information about best practices re-  
19 sulting from the middle school career and technical  
20 education exploration program to similar career and  
21 technical education programs of study, including  
22 such programs in urban and rural areas;

23          (8) a description of how the middle school ca-  
24 reer and technical education exploration program  
25 will be implemented;

1           (9) a description of how the middle school ca-  
2           reer and technical education exploration program  
3           will provide accessibility to students, especially eco-  
4           nomically disadvantaged, low-performing, and urban  
5           and rural students; and

6           (10) a description of how the eligible partner-  
7           ship will carry out the evaluation required under  
8           subsection (f).

9           (d) SELECTION OF GRANTEES.—

10           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall deter-  
11           mine, based on the peer review process described in  
12           paragraph (3) and subject to the requirement in  
13           paragraph (4), which eligible partnership applicants  
14           shall receive funding under this Act, and the amount  
15           of the grant funding under this Act that each se-  
16           lected eligible partnership will receive.

17           (2) GRANT AMOUNTS.—In determining the  
18           amount of each grant awarded under this Act, the  
19           Secretary shall—

20                   (A) ensure that all grants are of sufficient  
21                   size, scope, and quality to be effective; and

22                   (B) take into account the total amount of  
23                   funds available for all grants under this Act  
24                   and the types of activities proposed to be car-  
25                   ried out by the eligible partnership.

1 (3) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—

2 (A) ESTABLISHMENT OF PEER REVIEW  
3 COMMITTEE.—The Secretary shall convene a  
4 peer review committee to review applications for  
5 grants under this Act and to make rec-  
6 ommendations to the Secretary regarding the  
7 selection of grantees.

8 (B) MEMBERS OF THE PEER REVIEW COM-  
9 MITTEE.—The peer review committee shall in-  
10 clude the following members:

11 (i) Educators who have experience im-  
12 plementing career and technical education  
13 programs and career exploration programs.

14 (ii) Experts in the field of career and  
15 technical education.

16 (4) RURAL OR SMALL LOCAL EDUCATIONAL  
17 AGENCIES.—The Secretary shall set aside not less  
18 than 5 percent of the funds made available to award  
19 grants under this Act to award grants to eligible  
20 partnerships that include rural or small local edu-  
21 cational agencies, as defined by the Secretary.

22 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—Each eligible partnership re-  
23 ceiving a grant under this section shall use grant funds  
24 to develop and implement a middle school career and tech-  
25 nical education exploration program that—

1 (1) shall—

2 (A) include introductory courses or experi-  
3 ential activities, such as student apprenticeships  
4 or other work-based learning methods, and  
5 project-based learning experiences;

6 (B) include the implementation of a plan  
7 that demonstrates the transition from the mid-  
8 dle school career and technical education explo-  
9 ration program to a career and technical edu-  
10 cation program of study that is offered by the  
11 entity described in section 3(b)(2)(A)(i);

12 (C) include programs and activities related  
13 to the development of individualized graduation  
14 and career plans for students; and

15 (D) offer career guidance and academic  
16 counseling that—

17 (i) provides information about post-  
18 secondary education and career options;  
19 and

20 (ii) provides participating students  
21 with readily available career and labor  
22 market information, such as information  
23 about employment sectors, educational re-  
24 quirements, information on workforce sup-  
25 ply and demand, and other information on

1 careers that are aligned to State or local  
2 economic priorities; and

3 (2) may include expanded learning time activi-  
4 ties that—

5 (A) focus on career exploration, including  
6 apprenticeships and internships;

7 (B) are available to all students in a mid-  
8 dle school; and

9 (C) take place during a time that is out-  
10 side of the standard hours of enrollment for  
11 students that are served by the local edu-  
12 cational agency.

13 (f) EVALUATIONS AND REPORT.—

14 (1) EVALUATION.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible partner-  
16 ship that receives a grant under this Act shall  
17 collect appropriate data, or otherwise document  
18 through records, (in a manner that complies  
19 with section 444 of the General Education Pro-  
20 visions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g), commonly  
21 known as the “Family Educational Rights and  
22 Privacy Act of 1974” and other applicable Fed-  
23 eral and State privacy laws) the information  
24 necessary to conduct an evaluation of grant ac-  
25 tivities, including an evaluation of—

1 (i) the extent of student participation  
2 in the middle school career and technical  
3 education exploration program carried out  
4 under this Act;

5 (ii) the impact of the middle school  
6 career and technical education exploration  
7 program carried out under this Act on the  
8 students' transition to, or planned partici-  
9 pation in, career and technical programs of  
10 study (as described in section 122(c)(1)(A)  
11 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Tech-  
12 nical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C.  
13 2342(c)(1)(A)); and

14 (iii) any other measurable outcomes  
15 specified by the Secretary.

16 (B) RESOURCES OF THE ELIGIBLE PART-  
17 NERSHIP.—The evaluation described in this  
18 paragraph shall reflect the resources and capac-  
19 ity of the local educational agency, area career  
20 and technical education school, or educational  
21 service agency that is part of the eligible part-  
22 nership in a manner determined by the Sec-  
23 retary.

24 (2) REPORT.—The eligible partnership shall  
25 prepare and submit to the Secretary a report con-

- 1 taining the results of the evaluation described in
- 2 paragraph (1).