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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to establish a grant program to support the recognition of STEM micro-credentials, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MCCLELLAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to establish a grant program to support the recognition of STEM micro-credentials, and for other purposes.

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND FINDINGS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Advancing Credentialing and Career Empowerment for Leadership in Education, Recognition, And Teacher Excellence Act'' or the ''ACCELERATE Act''.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) High-quality STEM education is critical for the United States to maintain a competitive edge in the global economy and to address societal challenges.

(2) Effective elementary and secondary STEM educators are essential to delivering high-quality STEM education to students.

(3) High-quality micro-credentials offer a flexible, competency-based approach to strengthen and verify the knowledge and skills of educators in STEM fields, particularly in light of the constantly-evolving nature of such fields.

(4) STEM education increasingly encompasses interdisciplinary, career-connected, and applied learning approaches that integrate science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer science with real-world problem-solving and partnerships with industry, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations.

SEC. 2. STEM MICRO-CREDENTIAL GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subpart 4 of part B of title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6671 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 2246. STEM MICRO-CREDENTIAL GRANT PROGRAM.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall establish a program (referred to in this section as the 'program') to award, on a competitive basis, grants to applicable educational agencies for the purposes of adopting or improving, as appropriate, and implementing, standards, guidelines, and processes for the recognition of high-quality micro-credentials in STEM fields (referred to in this section as 'STEM micro-credentials'), including by carrying out the activities described in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (c).

"(b) APPLICATIONS.—In order to be eligible to receive a grant under the program, an applicable educational agency shall submit to the Secretary an application at such time, and in such manner, as the Secretary may require, including—

"(1) a plan for utilizing STEM micro-credentials to strengthen and verify the knowledge and skills of in-field and out-of-field STEM educators, including through the implementation of the activities described in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (c);

"(2) proposed evidence-based evaluation frameworks, aligned where possible with existing Federal research standards, for ensuring the quality, com-

parability, and effectiveness of the activities described in such paragraphs; and

''(3) any resources such educational agency determines it requires for the implementation of the activities described in such paragraphs.

''(c) GRANT USES.—An applicable educational agency that receives a grant under the program shall use the awarded funds for the purposes described in subsection (a), including by—

''(1) establishing and implementing quality-assurance standards for the recognition of STEM micro-credentials, including through the development and use of—

''(A) rigorous micro-credential design rubrics;

''(B) evidence-based professional learning resources; and

''(C) valid and reliable scoring criteria;

''(2) conducting outreach to familiarize educators with STEM micro-credentials and the potential benefits they offer to educators and their students;

''(3) developing and communicating opportunities for educators to use STEM micro-credentials to satisfy initial and ongoing licensure requirements;

''(4) collaborating with local educational agencies, institutions of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)), STEM industry partners, and non-profit organizations to implement research-backed STEM micro-credential standards, guidelines, and processes;

''(5) incentivizing educators to earn STEM micro-credentials through the provision of stipends and other benefits, including opportunities for career advancement;

''(6) coordinating, as appropriate, with Federally-supported STEM education research and evaluation activities, including those of the National Science Foundation Directorate for STEM Education; and

''(7) evaluating the overall impact of STEM micro-credentials on educator professional development and student outcomes.

''(d) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under the program, the Secretary shall give priority to applicable educational agencies that, in the application submitted under subsection (b), provide strategies for addressing gaps in STEM expertise among educators teaching in schools re-

ceiving funding under title I or subpart 2 of part B of title V.

''(e) DURATION.—A grant awarded by the Secretary to an applicable educational agency under the program shall be for a period of 3 years (referred to in this section as the 'grant period').

''(f) MAXIMUM FUNDING.—Each applicable educational agency that receives a grant under the program shall receive not more than $500,000 over the course of the grant period of such educational agency.

''(g) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY.—

''(1) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall issue such regulations or other guidance as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this section.

''(2) SUNSET OF AWARDING AUTHORITY.—The authority of the Secretary to award grants under the program shall terminate on the date that is 3 years after the date on which the program is established under subsection (a), except that nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to limit the authority of the Secretary to continue to carry out the program with respect to the grant period of any applicable educational agency that was awarded a grant prior to such date.

''(3) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not award more than 1 grant under the program to any applicable educational agency.

''(h) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) ANNUAL REPORT BY APPLICABLE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year following the conclusion of the first and second years of the grant period of an applicable educational agency, such educational agency shall submit a report to the Secretary on the activities conducted under the program during the first and second years, respectively, of such grant period.

''(B) CONTENT.—The report described in subparagraph (A) shall include—

''(i) a list of the activities described in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (c) which were carried out;

''(ii) a description of each STEM micro-credential the applicable educational agency recognized and publicized to STEM educators, including in grade levels and subject areas with significant shortages of

STEM educators (including in-field educators);

''(iii) the number and percentage of STEM educators (disaggregated by in-field and out-of-field educators) located within the State or Indian tribe (as the case may be) of the applicable educational agency who pursued and earned, and who pursued and did not earn, each STEM micro-credential;

''(iv) a description of any outreach activities carried out to familiarize educators with, and incentivize educators to earn, STEM micro-credentials through the provision of stipends and other benefits, including opportunities for career advancement; and

''(v) other information and metrics as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

''(2) FINAL REPORT BY APPLICABLE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years following the conclusion of the grant period of an applicable educational agency, such edu-

cational agency shall submit a final report to the Secretary on the activities conducted under the program during the third year of such grant period, as well as the overall outcomes for each year of such grant period.

''(B) CONTENT.—The report described in subparagraph (A) shall include—

''(i) an evaluation of the impact of STEM micro-credentials on educator retention, instructional quality, and student outcomes;

''(ii) the number and percentage of STEM educators (disaggregated by in-field and out-of-field educators) located within the State or Indian tribe (as the case may be) of the applicable educational agency who pursued and earned, and who pursued and did not earn, each STEM micro-credential;

''(iii) information comparing the demographic and professional characteristics, satisfaction levels, retention rates, and instructional quality of STEM educators who earned, and who did not earn, at least one STEM micro-credential; and

''(iv) other information and metrics as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

''(3) REPORTS BY SECRETARY.—For each year during which the Secretary is authorized to carry out the program, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress on the impact and effectiveness of the program, and each such report shall—

''(A) identify successful activities under the program for improving educator effectiveness and retention outcomes in STEM fields;

''(B) provide recommendations for the effective implementation by applicable educational agencies of such activities, including those described in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (c); and

''(C) include other information as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

''(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $28,000,000 for each fiscal year during which the Secretary is authorized to award grants under the program in accordance with subsection (g)(2).

''(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) APPLICABLE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term 'applicable educational agency' means—

''(A) a State educational agency; and

''(B) a tribal educational agency (as defined in section 6132).

''(2) MICRO-CREDENTIAL.—The term 'micro-credential' means, with respect to an applicable educational agency, a digital record—

''(A) which is recognized by such applicable educational agency as indicating the possession of a small, specific, and relevant professional skill; and

''(B) which is available to educators who meet the criteria (determined by such applicable educational agency) for competency in such skill.

''(3) STEM.—The term 'STEM' means science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including computer science.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 2 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 2245 the following new item:

''Sec. 2246. STEM micro-credential grant program.''.