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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R.

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. WILSON of Florida introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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# A BILL

To provide grants to State educational agencies to support State efforts to increase teacher salaries, and for other purposes.

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 “American Teacher  
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Teachers are the backbone of our nation,  
2           from the first bell to the last bell, they act as care-  
3           givers, counselors, role models, advocates, and cheer-  
4           leaders, helping children achieve their greatest po-  
5           tential.

6           (2) What is more, teacher shortages are among  
7           the most pressing threats to education access today,  
8           with districts across the country forced to radically  
9           adjust school offerings to respond to turnover and  
10          prolonged vacancies. Every day, stories surface of  
11          schools shortening their weeks, canceling courses, in-  
12          creasing student-teacher ratios, and placing under-  
13          prepared or temporary substitute staff in core in-  
14          structional roles. Such adjustments disrupt learning,  
15          take a sustained toll on teacher morale, and harm  
16          student achievement.

17          (3) The teacher wage penalty, characterizing  
18          lower weekly wages and overall compensation for  
19          teachers compared to college-educated peers in other  
20          professions, hit an all-time high of 23.5 percent in  
21          2021 and continues to demonstrate significant, ad-  
22          verse impacts on teacher recruitment and retention.  
23          According to a recent report by the Teacher Salary  
24          Project, over 90 percent of teachers believe low sal-  
25          ary contributes to shortages in their communities

1 and over 45 percent believe their salary is insuffi-  
2 cient for medium and long-term career sustain-  
3 ability.

4 (4) Significant numbers of teachers report  
5 maintaining multiple jobs to make ends meet or  
6 being able to work in their profession only through  
7 the support of a partner's higher-paying job. This  
8 instability is worse for teachers of color who are  
9 more likely to work in under-resourced schools. As  
10 a result, high-poverty communities face a com-  
11 pounded burden.

12 (5) In August of 2022, the White House issued  
13 a fact sheet renewing attention to the weak teacher  
14 pipeline and calling upon legislators to use federal,  
15 state, and local resources to strengthen teaching ca-  
16 reer pathways and ensure competitive, livable wages.  
17 This statement accompanies efforts by twenty-five  
18 states to propose and enact legislation addressing  
19 teacher compensation since January 2021.

20 (6) To restore stability in our schools and se-  
21 cure equitable access to high-quality education, we  
22 must raise awareness surrounding the value of  
23 teaching as a profession and provide compensation  
24 that reflects this value.

1 **SEC. 3. GRANTS TO SUPPORT STATE EFFORTS TO IN-**  
2 **CREASE TEACHER SALARIES.**

3 (a) **TEACHER SALARY INCENTIVE GRANTS.**—

4 (1) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this section is  
5 to ensure that each teacher who is employed full-  
6 time at a qualifying school in a State earns an an-  
7 nual salary for any year of employment of not less  
8 than \$60,000 (adjusted for inflation).

9 (2) **GRANTS FOR MINIMUM SALARY THRESH-**  
10 **OLD.**—

11 (A) **IN GENERAL.**—From amounts made  
12 available to carry out this section, the Secretary  
13 of Education shall award 4-year grants to State  
14 educational agencies.

15 (B) **APPLICATION.**—To be eligible to re-  
16 ceive such a grant, the State educational agency  
17 shall submit an application to the Secretary at  
18 such time, in such manner, and containing such  
19 information as the Secretary may require, in-  
20 cluding—

21 (i) the plan required under subpara-  
22 graph (C); and

23 (ii) the assurances required under  
24 subparagraph (D).

25 (C) **SUSTAINABILITY PLAN.**—The Sec-  
26 retary shall require a State educational agency

1 submitting an application under subparagraph  
2 (B) to provide a plan that demonstrates how,  
3 following the conclusion of the 4-year grant pe-  
4 riod, such agency will continue to maintain and  
5 adjust the annual base minimum salary in ac-  
6 cordance with subsection (b).

7 (D) REQUIRED ASSURANCES.—The Sec-  
8 retary shall require a State educational agency  
9 submitting an application under subparagraph  
10 (B) to provide an assurance in such application  
11 that—

12 (i) if necessary to achieve the purpose  
13 of this section, the State will enact and en-  
14 force legislation to establish a statewide  
15 teacher salary schedule or otherwise to es-  
16 tablish minimum teacher salary require-  
17 ments;

18 (ii) each teacher described in para-  
19 graph (1) will be compensated on a salary  
20 basis at an annual rate per school year  
21 that is not less than the salary threshold  
22 described in subsection (b);

23 (iii) each teacher who is employed  
24 part-time at a qualifying school in a State  
25 will be compensated on a salary basis at an

1 annual rate per school year that is not less  
2 than the salary threshold described in sub-  
3 section (b), proportionately reduced in ac-  
4 cordance with the number of hours worked  
5 by such teacher;

6 (iv) priority will be given to local edu-  
7 cational agencies in accordance with sub-  
8 paragraph (E)(ii); and

9 (v) the State educational agency will,  
10 upon request by the Secretary, carry out  
11 the compliance demonstration in accord-  
12 ance with subsection (c)(3).

13 (E) SUBGRANTS.—

14 (i) IN GENERAL.—A State educational  
15 agency awarded a grant under this section  
16 shall use not less than 85 percent of the  
17 grant funds to award subgrants to local  
18 educational agencies to carry out the pur-  
19 pose of this section.

20 (ii) PRIORITY.—The State educational  
21 agency, in allocating funds to local edu-  
22 cational agencies under this section, shall  
23 give priority to local educational agen-  
24 cies—

1 (I) serving greater numbers or  
2 percentages of elementary or sec-  
3 ondary schools receiving funds under  
4 title I of the Elementary and Sec-  
5 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20  
6 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.); or

7 (II) with respect to which all of  
8 the schools served by the local edu-  
9 cational agency are designated with a  
10 locale code of 41, 42, or 43, as deter-  
11 mined by the Secretary.

12 (b) SALARY THRESHOLD.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—For school year 2024–2025,  
14 the base minimum salary dollar amount shall be  
15 \$60,000.

16 (2) INFLATION ADJUSTMENT.—For school year  
17 2025–2026 and each succeeding school year, the dol-  
18 lar amount referred to in paragraph (1) shall be  
19 deemed to refer to the dollar amount calculated  
20 under this subsection for the preceding school year,  
21 increased by a percentage equal to the annual per-  
22 centage increase in the Consumer Price Index for All  
23 Urban Consumers published by the Department of  
24 Labor for the most recent calendar year.

1           (3) NO SALARY LIMIT.—The base minimum sal-  
2           ary dollar amount may be greater than the dollar  
3           amount described in paragraphs (1) or (2).

4           (c) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—

5           (1) IN GENERAL.—Grant funds received under  
6           this section shall be used to supplement and not  
7           supplant other Federal, State, and local public funds  
8           that would, in the absence of such Federal funds, be  
9           made available for teacher base salaries.

10          (2) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—A State edu-  
11          cational agency or local educational agency shall not  
12          reduce or adjust any teacher pay or State teacher  
13          loan forgiveness program due to the eligibility of  
14          teachers within the jurisdiction of such agency for  
15          pay supplementation under this section.

16          (3) COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION TO SEC-  
17          RETARY.—Each State educational agency and local  
18          educational agency, upon request by the Secretary,  
19          shall demonstrate that the methodology used to allo-  
20          cate teacher pay and State teacher loan forgiveness  
21          (if applicable) to teachers and qualifying schools en-  
22          sures that each such teacher and school receives the  
23          same State and local funds for teacher compensation  
24          it would receive if this Act had not been enacted.



1 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR ADJUSTMENT OF TEACHER SALARIES.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made available to  
3 carry out this section, the Secretary of Education shall  
4 award grants to eligible State educational agencies to pro-  
5 vide, in accordance with subsection (c), cost-of-living ad-  
6 justments to the annual base salary of such State and the  
7 annual salary of each teacher who is employed full-time  
8 at a qualifying school in such State.

9 (b) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive such a  
10 grant, the State educational agency shall submit an appli-  
11 cation to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and  
12 containing such information as the Secretary may require,  
13 including the demonstration required under subsection  
14 (d)(2).

15 (c) ADJUSTMENT.—The annual base salary of the  
16 State and the annual salary of each teacher described in  
17 subsection (a) shall be increased by a percentage equal to  
18 the annual percentage increase in the Consumer Price  
19 Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Depart-  
20 ment of Labor for the most recent calendar year.

21 (d) ELIGIBLE STATE DEFINED.—In this section, the  
22 term “eligible State” means a State—

23 (1) with an annual base salary of not less than  
24 \$60,000 for teachers who are employed full-time at  
25 a qualifying school; and

1           (2) that demonstrates in the application sub-  
2           mitted under subsection (b) that, due to inflation,  
3           such State is unable to adjust such base salary or  
4           the annual salaries of such teachers for cost-of-liv-  
5           ing.

6   **SEC. 5. ENHANCED AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF TEACH-**  
7                           **ING PROFESSION.**

8           The Secretary may reserve not more than 4 percent  
9           of the funds appropriated under section 8 to carry out a  
10          national campaign—

11           (1) to increase awareness about the importance  
12           of teachers and the value of the teaching profession;

13           (2) to encourage secondary school and college  
14           students to consider teaching as a professional ca-  
15           reer; and

16           (3) to diversify the pool of individuals who enter  
17           the teaching profession.

18   **SEC. 6. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

19          Nothing in this Act shall be construed to alter or oth-  
20          erwise affect the rights, remedies, and procedures afforded  
21          to school or local educational agency employees under Fed-  
22          eral, State, or local laws (including applicable regulations,  
23          court orders, or requirements that local educational agen-  
24          cies negotiate or meet and confer in good faith) or under  
25          the terms of collective bargaining agreements, memoranda

1 of understanding, or other agreements between such em-  
2 ployers and their employees.

3 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “elemen-  
6 tary school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary  
7 school”, “Secretary”, “State”, and “State edu-  
8 cational agency” have the meanings given such  
9 terms in section 8101 of the Elementary and Sec-  
10 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

11 (2) QUALIFYING SCHOOL.—The term “quali-  
12 fying school” means, with respect to any school year,  
13 a public elementary school or a public secondary  
14 school.

15 (3) TEACHER.—The term “teacher” means an  
16 individual who—

17 (A) is a teacher of record who provides di-  
18 rect classroom teaching (or classroom-type  
19 teaching in a nonclassroom setting) in a quali-  
20 fying school for not less than the normal or  
21 statutory number of hours of work for a full-  
22 time or part-time teacher over a complete  
23 school year (as determined by the State in  
24 which the school is located);

1 (B) meets the applicable requirements for  
2 State certification or licensure, as applicable, in  
3 the State in which such school is located and in  
4 the subject area in which the individual is the  
5 teacher of record; and

6 (C) possesses skills and knowledge needed  
7 for effective classroom practice, including with  
8 respect to demonstrating the ability to improve  
9 student learning.

10 (4) TEACHER OF RECORD.—The term “teacher  
11 of record” means a teacher who has—

12 (A) been assigned the responsibility for  
13 specified pupils’ learning in a grade, subject, or  
14 course as reflected on the school’s official  
15 record of attendance;

16 (B) learned and developed extensive teach-  
17 ing and basic classroom management skills; and

18 (C) demonstrated the ability to plan and  
19 deliver instruction to students from different  
20 cultural backgrounds and with different learn-  
21 ing styles and to assess and support student  
22 learning.

1 **SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2       There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
3 this Act such sums as may be necessary for fiscal years  
4 2024 through 2028.