

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To provide for hands-on learning opportunities in STEM education.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself and Mrs. CAPITO) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To provide for hands-on learning opportunities in STEM
education.

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 “Supporting STEM
5 Learning Opportunities Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

- 8 (1) Developing a robust, talented, and home-
9 grown workforce, particularly in the fields of STEM,

1 is critical to the success of the United States innova-
2 tion economy.

3 (2) The United States educational system is not
4 producing a sufficient number of workers with the
5 necessary STEM expertise to meet the needs of the
6 United States industry in STEM fields.

7 (3) Hands-on and experiential learning opportu-
8 nities outside of the classroom are critical for stu-
9 dent success in STEM subjects and careers, stimu-
10 lating students' interest, increasing confidence, and
11 creating motivation to pursue a related career.

12 (4) Hands-on and experiential learning opportu-
13 nities can be particularly successful in inspiring in-
14 terest in students who traditionally have been under-
15 represented in STEM fields, including girls, students
16 of color, and students from disadvantaged back-
17 grounds.

18 (5) An expansion of hands-on and experiential
19 learning programs across the United States would
20 expand the STEM workforce pipeline, developing
21 and training students for careers in STEM fields.

22 **SEC. 3. HANDS-ON LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN STEM**
23 **EDUCATION.**

24 (a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

1 (1) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “elementary
2 school”, “high school”, “secondary school”, and
3 “State” have the meanings given the terms in sec-
4 tion 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-
5 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

6 (2) ELIGIBLE NONPROFIT PROGRAM.—The
7 term “eligible nonprofit program”—

8 (A) means a nonprofit program serving
9 prekindergarten, elementary school, or sec-
10 ondary school students; and

11 (B) includes a program described in sub-
12 paragraph (A) that covers the continuum of
13 education from prekindergarten through high
14 school and is available in every State.

15 (3) DIRECTOR.—The term “Director” means
16 the Director of the National Science Foundation.

17 (4) STEM.—The term “STEM” means science,
18 technology, engineering, and mathematics.

19 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are
20 to—

21 (1) provide effective, compelling, and engaging
22 means for teaching and reinforcing fundamental
23 STEM concepts and inspiring the youth of the
24 United States to pursue careers in STEM-related
25 fields;

1 (2) expand the STEM workforce pipeline by de-
2 veloping and training students for careers in United
3 States STEM fields; and

4 (3) broaden participation in the STEM work-
5 force by underrepresented population groups.

6 (c) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall, subject
8 to the availability of appropriations for such pur-
9 poses, provide grants to eligible nonprofit programs
10 for supporting hands-on learning opportunities in
11 STEM education, including via after-school activities
12 and innovative learning opportunities such as robot-
13 ics competitions, for the purposes of evaluating the
14 impact of such programs on STEM learning and
15 disseminating the results of such evaluations.

16 (2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under the
17 program, the Director shall give priority to eligible
18 nonprofit programs serving students that attend ele-
19 mentary schools or secondary schools (including high
20 schools) that—

21 (A) are implementing comprehensive sup-
22 port and improvement activities or targeted
23 support and improvement activities under para-
24 graph (1) or (2) of section 1111(d) of the Ele-

1 mentary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
2 (20 U.S.C. 6311(d)); or

3 (B) serve high percentages of students who
4 are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch
5 under the Richard B. Russell National School
6 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) (which, in
7 the case of a high school, may be calculated
8 using comparable data from the schools that
9 feed into the high school).

10 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
11 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
12 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.