

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3716

To award grants to States to establish a Seal of Biliteracy program to recognize high-level student proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in both English and a second language.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

Ms. BROWNLEY of California (for herself, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. VARGAS, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Mr. NOLAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To award grants to States to establish a Seal of Biliteracy program to recognize high-level student proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in both English and a second language.

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 “Biliteracy Education
5 Seal and Teaching Act” or the “BEST Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The people of the United States celebrate
2 cultural and linguistic diversity and seek to prepare
3 students with skills to succeed in the 21st century.

4 (2) It is fitting to commend the dedication of
5 students who have achieved proficiency in multiple
6 languages and to encourage their peers to follow in
7 their footsteps.

8 (3) The study of world languages in elementary
9 and secondary schools should be encouraged because
10 it contributes to a student's cognitive development
11 and to the national economy and security.

12 (4) Recognition of student achievement in lan-
13 guage proficiency will enable institutions of higher
14 education and employers to readily recognize and ac-
15 knowledge the valuable expertise of bilingual stu-
16 dents in academia and the workplace.

17 (5) California has pioneered the first State sys-
18 tem in the Nation to recognize students for achiev-
19 ing proficiency in multiple languages. In 2012, Cali-
20 fornia awarded a Seal of Biliteracy to over 10,000
21 graduating high school seniors in 37 school districts.

22 (6) Students in every State should be able to
23 benefit from a Seal of Biliteracy program.

1 **SEC. 3. STATE SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Education
3 shall award grants to States to establish or improve a Seal
4 of Biliteracy program to recognize student proficiency in
5 speaking, reading, and writing in both English and a sec-
6 ond language.

7 (b) GRANT APPLICATION.—In order to receive a
8 grant under this section, a State shall submit an applica-
9 tion to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and
10 containing such information and assurances as the Sec-
11 retary may require, including—

12 (1) a description of the criteria a student must
13 meet to demonstrate proficiency in speaking, read-
14 ing, and writing in both English and a second lan-
15 guage;

16 (2) assurances that a student who meets the re-
17 quirements under paragraph (1)—

18 (A) receives a permanent seal or other
19 marker on the student's secondary school di-
20 ploma or its equivalent; and

21 (B) receives documentation of proficiency
22 in the student's official academic transcript;
23 and

24 (3) assurances that a student is not charged a
25 fee for submitting an application under subsection
26 (c).

1 (c) STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN A SEAL OF
2 BILITERACY PROGRAM.—To participate in a Seal of
3 Biliteracy program, a student must submit an application
4 to the State that serves the student at such time, in such
5 manner, and containing such information and assurances
6 as the State may require, including assurances that the
7 student—

8 (1) will receive a secondary school diploma or
9 its equivalent in the year the student submits an ap-
10 plication; and

11 (2) has met the criteria established by the State
12 under subsection (b)(1).

13 (d) STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR APPLICATION.—A
14 student who gained proficiency in a second language out-
15 side of school may apply to participate in a Seal of
16 Biliteracy program under subsection (c).

17 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—Grant funds made available
18 under this section shall be used for administrative costs
19 of establishing or improving and carrying out a Seal of
20 Biliteracy program and for public outreach and education
21 about that program.

22 (f) GRANT TERMS.—

23 (1) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this
24 section shall be for a period of 2 years, and may be
25 renewed at the discretion of the Secretary.

1 (2) RENEWAL.—At the end of a grant term, the
2 recipient of such grant may reapply for a grant
3 under this section.

4 (3) LIMITATIONS.—A grant recipient under this
5 section shall not have more than 1 grant under this
6 section at anytime.

7 (4) RETURN OF UNSPENT GRANT FUNDS.—Not
8 later than 6 months after the date on which a grant
9 term ends, a recipient of a grant under this section
10 shall return any unspent grant funds to the Sec-
11 retary.

12 (g) REPORT.—Not later than 9 months after receiv-
13 ing a grant under this section, a grant recipient shall issue
14 a report to the Secretary describing the implementation
15 of the Seal of Biliteracy program.

16 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) ESEA DEFINITIONS.—The terms “sec-
18 ondary school”, “Secretary”, and “State” have the
19 meanings given those terms in section 9101 of the
20 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
21 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

22 (2) SECOND LANGUAGE.—The term “second
23 language” means any language other than English,
24 including Braille and American Sign Language.

1 (3) SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM.—The term
2 “Seal of Biliteracy program” means any program es-
3 tablished under section 3 of this Act.

4 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
5 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary
6 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023
7 to carry out this section.

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