

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1666

To establish an Employee Ownership and Participation Initiative, and for  
other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 23 (legislative day, MAY 22), 2019

Mr. SANDERS (for himself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. SHAHEEN,  
Ms. WARREN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. LEAHY, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) intro-  
duced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Com-  
mittee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To establish an Employee Ownership and Participation  
Initiative, 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 “Worker Ownership,  
5 Readiness, and Knowledge Act” or the “WORK Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. WORKER OWNERSHIP, READINESS, AND KNOWL-**  
7 **EDGE.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1           (1) EXISTING PROGRAM.—The term “existing  
2       program” means a program, designed to promote  
3       employee ownership and employee participation in  
4       business decisionmaking, that exists on the date on  
5       which the Secretary is carrying out a responsibility  
6       authorized under this section.

7           (2) INITIATIVE.—The term “Initiative” means  
8       the Employee Ownership and Participation Initiative  
9       established under subsection (b).

10          (3) NEW PROGRAM.—The term “new program”  
11       means a program, designed to promote employee  
12       ownership and employee participation in business de-  
13       cisionmaking, that does not exist on the date on  
14       which the Secretary is carrying out a responsibility  
15       authorized under this section.

16          (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
17       the Secretary of Labor, acting through the Assistant  
18       Secretary for Employment and Training.

19          (5) STATE.—The term “State” means any of  
20       the 50 States of the United States.

21       (b) EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION INI-  
22       TIATIVE.—

23           (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Labor  
24       shall establish within the Employment and Training  
25       Administration of the Department of Labor an Em-

1        ployee Ownership and Participation Initiative to pro-  
2        mote employee ownership and employee participation  
3        in business decisionmaking.

4            (2) FUNCTIONS.—In carrying out the Initiative,  
5        the Secretary shall—

6            (A) support within the States existing pro-  
7        grams designed to promote employee ownership  
8        and employee participation in business decision-  
9        making; and

10          (B) facilitate within the States the forma-  
11        tion of new programs designed to promote em-  
12        ployee ownership and employee participation in  
13        business decisionmaking.

14          (3) DUTIES.—To carry out the functions enu-  
15        merated in paragraph (2), the Secretary shall—

16          (A) support new programs and existing  
17        programs by—

18            (i) making Federal grants authorized  
19        under subsection (d); and

20            (ii)(I) acting as a clearinghouse on  
21        techniques employed by new programs and  
22        existing programs within the States, and  
23        disseminating information relating to those  
24        techniques to the programs; or

1 (II) funding projects for information  
2 gathering on those techniques, and dis-  
3 semination of that information to the pro-  
4 grams, by groups outside the Employment  
5 and Training Administration; and

6 (B) facilitate the formation of new pro-  
7 grams, in ways that include holding or funding  
8 an annual conference of representatives from  
9 States with existing programs, representatives  
10 from States developing new programs, and rep-  
11 resentatives from States without existing pro-  
12 grams.

13 (c) PROGRAMS REGARDING EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP  
14 AND PARTICIPATION.—

15 (1) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—Not later  
16 than 180 days after the date of enactment of this  
17 Act, the Secretary shall establish a program to en-  
18 courage new programs and existing programs within  
19 the States to foster employee ownership and em-  
20 ployee participation in business decisionmaking  
21 throughout the United States.

22 (2) PURPOSE OF PROGRAM.—The purpose of  
23 the program established under paragraph (1) is to  
24 encourage new and existing programs within the  
25 States that focus on—

1           (A) providing education and outreach to  
2           inform employees and employers about the pos-  
3           sibilities and benefits of employee ownership,  
4           business ownership succession planning, and  
5           employee participation in business decision-  
6           making, including providing information about  
7           financial education, employee teams, open-book  
8           management, and other tools that enable em-  
9           ployees to share ideas and information about  
10          how their businesses can succeed;

11          (B) providing technical assistance to assist  
12          employee efforts to become business owners, to  
13          enable employers and employees to explore and  
14          assess the feasibility of transferring full or par-  
15          tial ownership to employees, and to encourage  
16          employees and employers to start new em-  
17          ployee-owned businesses;

18          (C) training employees and employers with  
19          respect to methods of employee participation in  
20          open-book management, work teams, commit-  
21          tees, and other approaches for seeking greater  
22          employee input; and

23          (D) training other entities to apply for  
24          funding under this subsection, to establish new  
25          programs, and to carry out program activities.

1           (3) PROGRAM DETAILS.—The Secretary may in-  
2       clude, in the program established under paragraph  
3       (1), provisions that—

4           (A) in the case of activities described in  
5       paragraph (2)(A)—

6           (i) target key groups, such as retiring  
7       business owners, senior managers, unions,  
8       trade associations, community organiza-  
9       tions, and economic development organiza-  
10      tions;

11          (ii) encourage cooperation in the orga-  
12      nization of workshops and conferences; and

13          (iii) prepare and distribute materials  
14      concerning employee ownership and par-  
15      ticipation, and business ownership succes-  
16      sion planning;

17          (B) in the case of activities described in  
18      paragraph (2)(B)—

19          (i) provide preliminary technical as-  
20      sistance to employee groups, managers,  
21      and retiring owners exploring the possi-  
22      bility of employee ownership;

23          (ii) provide for the performance of  
24      preliminary feasibility assessments;

1 (iii) assist in the funding of objective  
2 third-party feasibility studies and prelimi-  
3 nary business valuations, and in selecting  
4 and monitoring professionals qualified to  
5 conduct such studies; and

6 (iv) provide a data bank to help em-  
7 ployees find legal, financial, and technical  
8 advice in connection with business owner-  
9 ship;

10 (C) in the case of activities described in  
11 paragraph (2)(C)—

12 (i) provide for courses on employee  
13 participation; and

14 (ii) provide for the development and  
15 fostering of networks of employee-owned  
16 companies to spread the use of successful  
17 participation techniques; and

18 (D) in the case of training described in  
19 paragraph (2)(D)—

20 (i) provide for visits to existing pro-  
21 grams by staff from new programs receiv-  
22 ing funding under this section; and

23 (ii) provide materials to be used for  
24 such training.

1           (4) GUIDANCE.—The Secretary shall issue for-  
 2           mal guidance, for recipients of grants awarded under  
 3           subsection (d) and one-stop partners affiliated with  
 4           the Statewide workforce investment systems de-  
 5           scribed in section 106 of the Workforce Investment  
 6           Act of 1998 (29 U.S.C. 2881), proposing that pro-  
 7           grams and other activities funded under this section  
 8           be—

9                   (A) proactive in encouraging actions and  
 10                  activities that promote employee ownership of,  
 11                  and participation in, businesses; and

12                  (B) comprehensive in emphasizing both  
 13                  employee ownership of, and participation in,  
 14                  businesses so as to increase productivity and  
 15                  broaden capital ownership.

16       (d) GRANTS.—

17           (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the program  
 18           established under subsection (c), the Secretary may  
 19           make grants for use in connection with new pro-  
 20           grams and existing programs within a State for any  
 21           of the following activities:

22                   (A) Education and outreach as provided in  
 23                  subsection (c)(2)(A).

24                   (B) Technical assistance as provided in  
 25                  subsection (c)(2)(B).



1 (C) Training activities for employees and  
2 employers as provided in subsection (c)(2)(C).

3 (D) Activities facilitating cooperation  
4 among employee-owned firms.

5 (E) Training as provided in subsection  
6 (c)(2)(D) for new programs provided by partici-  
7 pants in existing programs dedicated to the ob-  
8 jectives of this section, except that, for each fis-  
9 cal year, the amount of the grants made for  
10 such training shall not exceed 10 percent of the  
11 total amount of the grants made under this sec-  
12 tion.

13 (2) AMOUNTS AND CONDITIONS.—The Sec-  
14 retary shall determine the amount and any condi-  
15 tions for a grant made under this subsection. The  
16 amount of the grant shall be subject to paragraph  
17 (6), and shall reflect the capacity of the applicant  
18 for the grant.

19 (3) APPLICATIONS.—Each entity desiring a  
20 grant under this subsection shall submit an applica-  
21 tion to the Secretary at such time, in such manner,  
22 and accompanied by such information as the Sec-  
23 retary may reasonably require.

24 (4) STATE APPLICATIONS.—Each State may  
25 sponsor and submit an application under paragraph

1 (3) on behalf of any local entity consisting of a unit  
2 of State or local government, State-supported insti-  
3 tution of higher education, or nonprofit organization,  
4 meeting the requirements of this section.

5 (5) APPLICATIONS BY ENTITIES.—

6 (A) ENTITY APPLICATIONS.—If a State  
7 fails to support or establish a program pursu-  
8 ant to this section during any fiscal year, the  
9 Secretary shall, in the subsequent fiscal years,  
10 allow local entities described in paragraph (4)  
11 from that State to make applications for grants  
12 under paragraph (3) on their own initiative.

13 (B) APPLICATION SCREENING.—Any State  
14 failing to support or establish a program pursu-  
15 ant to this section during any fiscal year may  
16 submit applications under paragraph (3) in the  
17 subsequent fiscal years but may not screen ap-  
18 plications by local entities described in para-  
19 graph (4) before submitting the applications to  
20 the Secretary.

21 (6) LIMITATIONS.—A recipient of a grant made  
22 under this subsection shall not receive, during a fis-  
23 cal year, in the aggregate, more than the following  
24 amounts:

25 (A) For fiscal year 2020, \$300,000.

1 (B) For fiscal year 2021, \$330,000.

2 (C) For fiscal year 2022, \$363,000.

3 (D) For fiscal year 2023, \$399,300.

4 (E) For fiscal year 2024, \$439,200.

5 (7) ANNUAL REPORT.—For each year, each re-  
6 cipient of a grant under this subsection shall submit  
7 to the Secretary a report describing how grant funds  
8 allocated pursuant to this subsection were expended  
9 during the 12-month period preceding the date of  
10 the submission of the report.

11 (e) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary is authorized to  
12 reserve not more than 10 percent of the funds appro-  
13 priated for a fiscal year to carry out this section, for the  
14 purposes of conducting evaluations of the grant programs  
15 identified in subsection (d) and to provide related technical  
16 assistance.

17 (f) REPORTING.—Not later than the expiration of the  
18 36-month period following the date of enactment of this  
19 Act, the Secretary shall prepare and submit to Congress  
20 a report—

21 (1) on progress related to employee ownership  
22 and participation in businesses in the United States;  
23 and

24 (2) containing an analysis of critical costs and  
25 benefits of activities carried out under this section.

1 (g) AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be  
3 appropriated for the purpose of making grants pur-  
4 suant to subsection (d) the following:

5 (A) For fiscal year 2020, \$3,850,000.

6 (B) For fiscal year 2021, \$6,050,000.

7 (C) For fiscal year 2022, \$8,800,000.

8 (D) For fiscal year 2023, \$11,550,000.

9 (E) For fiscal year 2024, \$14,850,000.

10 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—There are  
11 authorized to be appropriated for the purpose of  
12 funding the administrative expenses related to the  
13 Initiative, for each of fiscal years 2020 through  
14 2024, an amount not in excess of—

15 (A) \$350,000; or

16 (B) 5.0 percent of the maximum amount  
17 available under paragraph (1) for that fiscal  
18 year.

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