

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9674

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to direct the Secretary of Labor to carry out a competitive grant program to support community colleges and career and technical education centers in developing immersive technology education and training programs for workforce development, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 22, 2022

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to direct the Secretary of Labor to carry out a competitive grant program to support community colleges and career and technical education centers in developing immersive technology education and training programs for workforce development, 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 “Immersive Technology
5 for the American Workforce Act of 2022”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Rural communities have unique workforce
4 considerations and challenges.

5 (2) Almost 25 percent of Americans live in
6 rural communities, and while urban areas have expe-
7 rienced job and population growth, rural commu-
8 nities face static or declining populations and job de-
9 cline.

10 (3) Rural communities were hit harder and re-
11 covered more slowly than urban centers during the
12 2007–2008 recession and have experienced more
13 economic depression and decline in college enroll-
14 ment due to the COVID–19 pandemic.

15 (4) Rural communities historically have lower
16 rates of postsecondary education, which is a barrier
17 to traditional employment in industries like agri-
18 culture and manufacturing.

19 (5) It is estimated that by the end of 2022 over
20 half of all employees will require “significant”
21 reskilling, which is less expensive than replacing an
22 individual employee.

23 (6) Immersive technologies are proving effective
24 in helping rural communities tackle these challenges.

25 (7) Technologically mediated training, including
26 augmented reality, virtual reality, mixed reality, and

1 high-tech simulations are increasingly valued as tools
2 to train workers in industries ranging from manu-
3 facturing to health care, agriculture to construction,
4 and clean energy to public safety.

5 (8) Use of immersive technology permits on-site
6 training and continued education, promotes effi-
7 ciency, aids recruiting as well as retention, improves
8 communication and collaboration, and increases
9 safety.

10 (9) Immersive technologies allow workers to
11 train directly under the supervision and tutelage of
12 more experienced experts who are located outside of
13 the local community.

14 (10) These technologies help workers remain
15 well equipped for the demands of the modern econ-
16 omy. As the need for reskilling increases, so will the
17 need for technologies which support American work-
18 ers rather than replace them.

19 (11) Community colleges, area career and tech-
20 nical education centers, and other training providers
21 are uniquely positioned to support rural communities
22 in skills development and workforce training.

23 (12) People without a postsecondary credential
24 are 4 times more likely to have a job that can be
25 lost to automation than those who have one, increas-

1 ing their need to learn new skills in order to remain
2 competitive and employable.

3 (13) Community colleges provide education at a
4 lower cost, with most graduates incurring no student
5 debt.

6 (14) In addition to providing lower cost work-
7 force development training and skills education ap-
8 plicable across a range of roles and occupations,
9 community colleges serve as large regional employers
10 and critical community hubs.

11 (15) Offering grants to community colleges and
12 area career and technical education centers in rural
13 areas to develop and provide immersive technology
14 training programs will help rural communities in the
15 short term and position them for success in the
16 longer term.

17 (16) Despite their proven value, community col-
18 leges and area career and technical education
19 schools bear significant funding limitations and
20 shortages.

21 (17) Providing immersive technology training
22 programs through community colleges can help rural
23 communities retain local talent, whether by pro-
24 viding qualification for new local jobs or for remote
25 employment opportunities with companies

1 headquartered in urban centers that are struggling
2 to fill jobs.

3 (18) Immersive technology training partnership
4 with community colleges and area career and tech-
5 nical education schools also complements recent
6 Federal funding for broadband connection and phys-
7 ical infrastructure, the two other biggest hurdles fac-
8 ing rural students and workers seeking reskilling or
9 upskilling.

10 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY AND EDU-**
11 **CATION WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS**
12 **AND CAREER PATHWAYS.**

13 Subtitle D of title I of the Workforce Innovation and
14 Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3221 et seq.) is amended—

15 (1) by redesignating section 172 as section 173;

16 and

17 (2) by inserting after section 171 the following:

18 **“SEC. 172. GRANTS FOR IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY AND**
19 **EDUCATION WORKFORCE TRAINING PRO-**
20 **GRAMS AND CAREER PATHWAYS.**

21 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
22 date of enactment of this section, from the amounts appro-
23 priated to carry out this section, the Secretary shall award
24 grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to carry
25 out immersive technology education and workforce train-

1 ing programs or career pathways that use immersive tech-
2 nology.

3 “(b) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity receiving a
4 grant under this section shall use such grant for at least
5 one of the following:

6 “(1) To develop and implement or improve an
7 immersive technology education and workforce train-
8 ing program, or a related policy, program, or other
9 activity that uses immersive technology that—

10 “(A) facilitates the transfer of academic
11 credits (including for courses in the same field
12 or program of study) between covered commu-
13 nity colleges and other institutions of higher
14 education, including other covered community
15 colleges; and

16 “(B) develops or enhances supportive serv-
17 ices for students enrolled in such a program or
18 activity.

19 “(2) The creation or alignment of a career
20 pathway that provides a sequence of education and
21 occupational training that leads to a recognized
22 postsecondary credential, including a program or ac-
23 tivity that—

24 “(A)(i) includes integrated education and
25 training that uses immersive technology; and

1 “(ii) is designed to increase the provision
2 of workforce training for students (including in-
3 dividuals who are members of the Armed
4 Forces and veterans) in order to facilitate the
5 entry of such students into in-demand industry
6 sectors or occupations; or

7 “(B) enables the training of instructors in
8 the use of immersive technology in education
9 and workforce training programs.

10 “(c) DURATION OF GRANTS.—A grant awarded
11 under this section shall be for a period of not more than
12 5 years, except that in the case of an eligible entity that
13 has carried out a program or activity with such a grant
14 that meets the criteria for satisfactory progress on per-
15 formance indicators as determined under subsection (h)(1)
16 for the initial 5-year grant period, the Secretary may ex-
17 tend the grant period for such eligible entity by not more
18 than 5 additional years.

19 “(d) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking a
20 grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary an
21 application at such time, in such manner, and containing
22 such information as the Secretary may require.

23 “(e) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this sec-
24 tion, the Secretary shall give priority to any eligible entity
25 that—

1 “(1) is working with, or in carrying out a pro-
2 gram or activity to be funded with such a grant
3 plans to work with, an industry or sector partner-
4 ship that prioritizes the hiring of individuals who
5 have obtained a recognized postsecondary credential
6 as a result of the program or activity; or

7 “(2) submits an application under subsection
8 (d) that demonstrates—

9 “(A) alignment with—

10 “(i) the State plan under section 102
11 or 103 of a State in which the eligible enti-
12 ty will be carrying out a program or activ-
13 ity to be funded with such a grant;

14 “(ii) the local plan under section 108
15 of a local area in which such a program or
16 activity will be carried out; or

17 “(iii) the State plan under section 122
18 of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Tech-
19 nical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C.
20 2342) with respect to a State in which
21 such a program or activity will be carried
22 out;

23 “(B) with quantitative data and evidence,
24 the extent to which the program or activity to

1 be funded by such a grant will meet the needs
2 of employers;

3 “(C) how such a program or activity will
4 target a specific in-demand industry sector or
5 occupation which has a skills gap;

6 “(D) how such a program or activity will
7 retrain workers from an industry sector that is
8 experiencing decreasing employment;

9 “(E) how such a program or activity will
10 target individuals with barriers to employment;

11 “(F) how such a program or activity will
12 serve an area of substantial unemployment (as
13 defined in section 132(b)(1)(B)); or

14 “(G) how such a program or activity will
15 serve a rural area.

16 “(f) REPORTS.—

17 “(1) REPORT TO THE SECRETARY.—Each eligi-
18 ble entity receiving a grant under this section shall
19 submit to the Secretary a report for each year of the
20 grant period for such grant that includes a descrip-
21 tion of each program and activity funded under the
22 grant, including—

23 “(A) the levels of performance achieved for
24 each indicator of performance under section
25 116(b)(2)(A)(i), disaggregated by age, race or

1 ethnicity, gender, barrier to employment, and
2 income of the participants of such program or
3 activity; and

4 “(B) in a case of an eligible entity that
5 worked with an industry or sector partnership
6 in carrying out such a program or activity, the
7 role of such partnership in carrying out the pro-
8 gram or activity.

9 “(2) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1
10 year after the first grant is awarded under this sec-
11 tion and biennially thereafter, the Secretary shall
12 submit to Congress a report that includes a sum-
13 mary of the information submitted under paragraph
14 (1) for the most recent 2-year period.

15 “(g) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall reserve not
16 less than 1 percent and not more than 5 percent of any
17 amounts made available for each fiscal year to conduct
18 a rigorous, independent evaluation of the programs and
19 activities carried out under this section.

20 “(h) SATISFACTORY PROGRESS.—

21 “(1) DETERMINATION OF CRITERIA.—The Sec-
22 retary, in coordination with the Secretary of Edu-
23 cation, shall determine the criteria for satisfactory
24 progress on the indicators of performance under sec-
25 tion 116(b)(2)(A)(i) for programs and activities

1 funded by grants awarded to eligible entities under
2 this section.

3 “(2) CESSATION OF FUNDS.—The Secretary
4 may not provide funds to any eligible entity under
5 a grant under this section after the third year of the
6 grant period unless each program and activity car-
7 ried out by the eligible entity with the grant has met
8 the criteria for satisfactory progress for the first 3
9 years of such grant period, as determined under
10 paragraph (1).

11 “(i) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary, in coordina-
12 tion with the Secretary of Education and each eligible en-
13 tity that receives funds under grants awarded under this
14 section after the third year of the grant periods for such
15 grants, shall—

16 “(1) establish best practices for using
17 immersive technology in workforce training and edu-
18 cation programs; and

19 “(2) publish such best practices on a publicly
20 available website of the Department of Labor.

21 “(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 “(1) COVERED COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The
23 term ‘covered community college’ means—

24 “(A) a public institution of higher edu-
25 cation (as defined in section 101(a) of the

1 Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)), at
2 which—

3 “(i) the highest degree awarded is an
4 associate degree; or

5 “(ii) an associate degree is the most
6 frequently awarded degree;

7 “(B) a branch campus of a 4-year public
8 institution of higher education (as defined in
9 section 101 of the Higher Education Act of
10 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)), if, at such branch
11 campus—

12 “(i) the highest degree awarded is an
13 associate degree; or

14 “(ii) an associate degree is the most
15 frequently awarded degree;

16 “(C) a 2-year Tribal College or University
17 (as defined in section 316(b)(3) of the Higher
18 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
19 1059c(b)(3))); or

20 “(D) a degree-granting Tribal College or
21 University (as defined in section 316(b)(3) of
22 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
23 1059c(b)(3))) at which—

24 “(i) the highest degree awarded is an
25 associate degree; or

1 “(ii) an associate degree is the most
2 frequently awarded degree.

3 “(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
4 tity’ means—

5 “(A) a community college;

6 “(B) an area career and technical edu-
7 cation school;

8 “(C) a postsecondary vocational institution
9 (as defined in section 102(c) of the Higher
10 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002(c))); or

11 “(D) a consortium of such colleges,
12 schools, or institutions.

13 “(3) IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY.—The term
14 ‘immersive technology’ means tools, including virtual
15 reality and augmented reality, that integrate the
16 physical environment with digital content to support
17 user engagement.

18 “(4) RURAL.—The term ‘rural’ means all popu-
19 lations, housing, and territories not included within
20 an urban area, in which an urban area is defined as
21 any gathered populations, housing, and territories
22 that meets or exceeds 50,000 or more people, or is
23 comprised of clusters consisting of at least 2,500
24 gathered populations, housing, and territory but less
25 than 50,000 people.”.

1 **SEC. 4. CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**

2 The table of contents for the Workforce Innovation
3 and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3101) is amended by
4 striking the item relating to section 172 and inserting the
5 following:

“Sec. 172. Grants for immersive technology and education workforce training
programs and career pathways.

“Sec. 173. Authorization of appropriations.”.

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