

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out an initiative to develop, expand, and improve rural childcare, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BROWN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out an initiative to develop, expand, and improve rural childcare, 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 “Expanding Childcare
5 in Rural America Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. EXPANDING CHILDCARE IN RURAL AMERICA INI-**
7 **TIATIVE.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) CHILDCARE.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—The term “childcare”
2 means any program that—

3 (i) provides quality care and early
4 education for young children who—

5 (I) are in kindergarten; or

6 (II) have not yet entered kinder-
7 garten; and

8 (ii) is operated by—

9 (I) an eligible childcare provider
10 described in section 658P(6)(A) of the
11 Child Care and Development Block
12 Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.
13 9858n(6)(A)); or

14 (II) a childcare provider that, on
15 the date of enactment of this Act—

16 (aa) is licensed, regulated,
17 or registered in the State, terri-
18 tory, or Indian Tribe in which
19 the provider is located; and

20 (bb) meets applicable State,
21 Tribal, territorial, and local
22 health and safety requirements.

23 (B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “childcare”
24 includes—

1 (i) a school-based program described
2 in subparagraph (A);

3 (ii) a facility used for a program de-
4 scribed in subparagraph (A); and

5 (iii) a service provided under a pro-
6 gram described in subparagraph (A).

7 (2) INITIATIVE.—The term “Initiative” means
8 the Expanding Childcare in Rural America Initiative
9 established under subsection (b).

10 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
11 the Secretary of Agriculture.

12 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish
13 an initiative, to be known as the “Expanding Childcare
14 in Rural America Initiative”, under which the Secretary
15 shall provide, for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2030,
16 priority in accordance with subsection (c) to address the
17 availability, quality, and cost of childcare in agricultural
18 and rural communities.

19 (c) CHILDCARE PRIORITIES.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
21 provision of law, in selecting recipients of loans and
22 grants under a program described in paragraph (2),
23 the Secretary shall give priority to any qualified ap-
24 plicant that proposes to use the loan or grant to ad-

1 dress the availability, quality, or cost of childcare in
2 an agricultural or rural community.

3 (2) DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS.—The pro-
4 grams referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

5 (A) The essential community facilities loan
6 and grant programs authorized under section
7 306(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural
8 Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)).

9 (B) The technical assistance and training
10 grant program authorized under section 306(a)
11 of that Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)).

12 (C) The rural business development grant
13 program authorized under section 310B(c) of
14 that Act (7 U.S.C. 1932(c)).

15 (D) The business and industry direct and
16 guaranteed loan program authorized under sec-
17 tion 310B(g) of that Act (7 U.S.C. 1932(g)).

18 (E) The rural microentrepreneur assist-
19 ance program authorized under section 379E of
20 that Act (7 U.S.C. 2008s).

21 (F) The rural innovation stronger economy
22 (RISE) grant program authorized under section
23 379I of that Act (7 U.S.C. 2008w).

24 (d) REQUIREMENTS.—In providing funding in ac-
25 cordance with the Initiative, the Secretary shall—

1 (1) give priority to communities in farming-de-
2 pendent counties, as described in the 2015 county
3 typology codes published by the Economic Research
4 Service (as revised); and

5 (2) ensure a balanced geographical distribution
6 of the benefits under the Initiative.

7 (e) USE OF INTERMEDIARIES.—In providing funding
8 in accordance with the Initiative, the Secretary may make
9 awards through a childcare resource and referral organiza-
10 tion, a staffed family child care network, a community de-
11 velopment financial institution, a nonprofit organization,
12 or a network of nonprofit organizations, with dem-
13 onstrated expertise in—

14 (1) providing technical or financial assistance
15 for the acquisition, construction, renovation, or im-
16 provement of childcare facilities;

17 (2) providing technical, financial, or managerial
18 assistance to childcare providers; or

19 (3) securing private sources of capital financing
20 for childcare or other low-income community devel-
21 opment.

22 (f) EVALUATION.—Not later than 2 years after the
23 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall conduct
24 a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evaluation of

- 1 the projects carried out using assistance provided under
2 the Initiative, including—
- 3 (1) a description of—
- 4 (A) the types of projects carried out;
- 5 (B) the communities in which the projects
6 are carried out;
- 7 (C) the organizations and entities partici-
8 pating in the projects; and
- 9 (D) the types of partnerships developed to
10 carry out the projects; and
- 11 (2) the economic and social impacts of the in-
12 vestments in the projects.