

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to benefit the Appalachia region, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MANCHIN, and Mr. WICKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to benefit the Appalachia region, 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 “Appalachia Oppor-  
5 tunity Grants Act of 2017”.

1 **SEC. 2. APPALACHIA INNOVATION GRANTS.**

2 Subtitle D of the Consolidated Farm and Rural De-  
3 velopment Act (7 U.S.C. 1981 et seq.) is amended by add-  
4 ing at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 379I. APPALACHIA INNOVATION GRANTS.**

6 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-  
8 tity’ means a unit of local government in the region.

9 “(2) REGION.—The term ‘region’ means the  
10 Appalachian region (as defined in section 14102(a)  
11 of title 40, United States Code).

12 “(b) GRANTS.—The Secretary may award grants to  
13 eligible entities to convene groups of public and private  
14 entities to collaborate in carrying out regional projects to  
15 accomplish positive economic and community impacts in  
16 the region.

17 “(c) COLLABORATIVE GROUPS.—

18 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive a  
19 grant under subsection (b), an eligible entity—

20 “(A) shall convene as part of the collabo-  
21 rative group representatives of each of—

22 “(i) a local economic development  
23 board or office in the region;

24 “(ii) a private company or association;

25 and

1           “(iii) an institution of higher edu-  
2           cation (as defined in section 101 of the  
3           Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.  
4           1001)) in the region; and

5           “(B) may convene as part of the collabo-  
6           rative group representatives of other entities  
7           (such as venture capital firms, nonprofit organi-  
8           zations, and philanthropic organizations) that  
9           the eligible entity determines are important to  
10          the goal of the regional project described in  
11          subsection (d)(2).

12          “(2) REFERRAL PROCESS.—

13                 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may  
14                 assist in the formation of a collaborative group  
15                 under paragraph (1) by establishing a referral  
16                 process under which a private company or asso-  
17                 ciation seeking to invest in a particular area in  
18                 the region is matched with an eligible entity lo-  
19                 cated in that area.

20                 “(B) DATABASE OF POTENTIAL INVES-  
21                 TORS.—In carrying out subparagraph (A), the  
22                 Secretary may—

23                         “(i) establish and maintain a database  
24                         of private companies and associations seek-  
25                         ing to invest in the region; and

1                   “(ii) coordinate with other Federal  
2 agencies, including the Department of  
3 Commerce, to register inquiries—

4                   “(I) that are made to those agen-  
5 cies by private companies and associa-  
6 tions seeking to invest in the region;  
7 and

8                   “(II) in the database described in  
9 clause (i).

10       “(d) PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.—A regional project  
11 carried out by a collaborative group under subsection (b)  
12 shall—

13               “(1) involve not fewer than 2 municipalities  
14 that share a border; and

15               “(2) complete a specific activity that has as a  
16 goal—

17                   “(A) job creation in the region;

18                   “(B) expansion of the capacity of post-sec-  
19 ondary education in the region;

20                   “(C) growth of tourism in the region;

21                   “(D) improving public health in the region;

22               or

23                   “(E) upgrading regional infrastructure.

24       “(e) APPLICATIONS.—



1           “(G) a description of the positive economic  
2 or community impact (including relating to edu-  
3 cation) of the regional project;

4           “(H) an assessment of the assets and  
5 weaknesses of the community in which the re-  
6 gional project will be implemented;

7           “(I) a regional strategic plan that—

8               “(i) takes into account the assessment  
9 described in subparagraph (H); and

10               “(ii) includes an analysis of the align-  
11 ment of the regional project with the re-  
12 gional strategic plan; and

13           “(J) evidence, with full transparency and  
14 credibility, of minimal obstruction to the com-  
15 pletion of the project design phase described in  
16 subsection (f)(2)(A) by not later than 1 year  
17 after the date on which the eligible entity re-  
18 ceives the grant.

19           “(2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-  
20 ority to applications submitted under paragraph (1)  
21 that describe a positive, measurable economic im-  
22 pact.

23           “(f) GRANT FUNDS.—

1           “(1) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—A grant  
2           for a regional project under subsection (b) shall be  
3           not more than \$2,000,000.

4           “(2) PHASES.—A grant under subsection (b)  
5           shall be awarded in the following 2 phases:

6                   “(A) PROJECT DESIGN.—An eligible entity  
7                   may use 50 percent of the grant during the pe-  
8                   riod beginning on the date on which the eligible  
9                   entity receives the grant and ending not later  
10                  than 1 year after that date to continue the  
11                  planning and design of the regional project, in-  
12                  cluding activities such as—

13                           “(i) workforce training;

14                           “(ii) building design;

15                           “(iii) permit approvals; and

16                           “(iv) real estate arrangements.

17                   “(B) PROJECT DEVELOPMENT.—An eligi-  
18                   ble entity that completes the planning and de-  
19                   sign of the regional project under subparagraph  
20                   (A) may use the remaining grant funds for the  
21                   completion of the construction and implementa-  
22                   tion of the regional project.

23           “(3) MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT.—An el-  
24           igible entity that receives a grant under subsection

1 (b) shall provide non-Federal funding equal to not  
2 less than 10 percent of the amount of the grant.

3 “(4) RESERVATION OF GRANT FUNDS.—The  
4 Secretary shall reserve 20 percent of the funds made  
5 available under subsection (h) for each fiscal year to  
6 award grants to eligible entities that convene col-  
7 laborative groups that include a representative of a  
8 private company or association that is located in the  
9 region.

10 “(g) REVIEW OF GRANT PROGRAM.—

11 “(1) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE  
12 REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United  
13 States shall conduct a review of the implementation  
14 of this section for—

15 “(A) the 2-year period beginning on the  
16 date on which the Secretary begins to accept  
17 applications for grants under this section; and

18 “(B) each 4-year period thereafter.

19 “(2) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary  
20 shall submit to Congress an annual report describ-  
21 ing—

22 “(A) funding decisions under this section;

23 “(B) a justification for each grant awarded  
24 under this section; and



1           “(C) with respect to each regional project  
2           that has received a grant under this section, the  
3           extent to which—

4                   “(i) benchmarks for the project have  
5                   been met in accordance with the timeline  
6                   for the project; and

7                   “(ii) the project may be considered an  
8                   example to other municipalities desiring a  
9                   grant under this section.

10          “(h) FUNDING.—Of amounts made available for the  
11          Dislocated Worker National Reserve fund under section  
12          132(a)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Oppor-  
13          tunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3172(a)(2)(A)), \$100,000,000 shall  
14          be used to carry out this section for each of fiscal years  
15          2018 through 2027.”.