

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To increase the participation of historically underrepresented demographic groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and industry.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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

A BILL

To increase the participation of historically underrepresented demographic groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and industry.

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 “Women and Underrep-
5 resented Minorities in STEM Booster Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPA-**
7 **TION OF WOMEN AND UNDERREPRESENTED**
8 **MINORITIES IN STEM FIELDS.**

9 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) According to the National Academies of
2 Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM),
3 science, technology, engineering, and math (referred
4 to in this Act as “STEM”) education is critical to
5 ensuring the United States maintains a diverse and
6 competitive workforce.

7 (2) According to NASEM and the National In-
8 stitutes of Health (NIH), diverse teams of STEM
9 professionals innovate at higher rates than teams
10 composed of individuals with similar identities or
11 backgrounds.

12 (3) According to the National Science Founda-
13 tion (NSF), in 2020, women earned only 43 percent
14 of bachelor’s degrees in physical and earth sciences,
15 26 percent in mathematical and computer sciences,
16 and 24 percent in engineering. By contrast, women
17 earned 66 percent of bachelor’s degrees in social and
18 behavioral sciences and 64 percent in agricultural
19 and biological sciences.

20 (4) According to the NSF, STEM degree pro-
21 grams that are currently underrepresented by
22 women also receive greater Federal financial support
23 for education and living expenses, compared with de-
24 gree programs with disproportionately high female

1 enrollment. Thus, male graduate students receive
2 more Federal financial support than women.

3 (5) According to the NSF, while Black or Afri-
4 can Americans made up 14 percent of the population
5 of the United States (ages 18-34 years) in 2021,
6 only 9 percent of bachelor's degree recipients in
7 science and engineering were awarded to that same
8 racial group. Moreover, while 22 percent of the pop-
9 ulation of the United States (ages 18-34) were His-
10 panic or Latino, they comprised only 17 percent of
11 science and engineering bachelor's degrees awarded
12 that year.

13 (6) According to the National Center for Edu-
14 cation Statistics (NCES), only 0.3 percent of bach-
15 elors' degrees and less than 0.2 percent of masters
16 and doctoral degrees in STEM were awarded to
17 American Indian and Alaska Native students from
18 2020 through 2021, less than half their representa-
19 tion of the total population of the United States in
20 2021.

21 (7) The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in
22 2023, only 5 percent of women who worked full time
23 in the United States were employed in computer, en-
24 gineering, or science occupations while nearly 12
25 percent of men who worked full time in the United

1 States were employed in computer, engineering, or
2 science occupations. Less than 5 percent of Black or
3 African Americans who worked full time in the
4 United States were employed in computer, engineer-
5 ing, or science occupations and only 4 percent of
6 Hispanic or Latino Americans who worked full time
7 in the United States were employed in computer, en-
8 gineering, or science occupations, while the national
9 average of the full-time workforce in the United
10 States who were employed in computer, engineering,
11 or science occupations was 9 percent.

12 (8) According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from
13 2017 through 2021, only 5 percent of American In-
14 dian and Alaska Natives who worked full time in the
15 United States were employed in computer, engineer-
16 ing, or science occupations.

17 (9) According to the National Center for
18 Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES),
19 women leave STEM fields at much higher rates than
20 men. In 2021, while 79 percent of women awarded
21 STEM degrees in 2020 were employed in a STEM
22 occupation, only 53 percent of women remained in
23 STEM within 5 years of earning their highest de-
24 gree, and only 44 percent remained after 10 years.
25 By contrast, 86 percent of men who had earned

1 STEM degrees in 2020 were employed in STEM oc-
2 cupations, 73 percent of men remained in STEM
3 within 5 years of earning their degree, and 70 per-
4 cent of men remained in STEM after 10 years.

5 (10) According to NCSES, STEM retention is
6 even lower for women of color. In 2021, only 50 per-
7 cent of Black women and 44 percent of Hispanic
8 women who received STEM degrees in 2020 were
9 employed in a STEM occupation, compared with 82
10 percent of white, non-Hispanic women. Less than 30
11 percent of Black or Hispanic women remained in
12 STEM after 10 years, compared with 52 percent of
13 white, non-Hispanic women.

14 (11) According to NCSES, STEM retention
15 rates for Black or Hispanic men are higher than for
16 women of any race but lower than white, non-His-
17 panic men. In 2021, 87 percent of Black or His-
18 panic men who received STEM degrees in 2020 were
19 employed in a STEM occupation, compared with 93
20 percent of white, non-Hispanic men. Only 51 percent
21 of Black and 61 percent of Hispanic men remained
22 in STEM after 10 years, compared with 74 percent
23 of white, non-Hispanic men.

24 (12) Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indi-
25 cate that certain Asian American subgroups are still

1 underrepresented in STEM. From 2017 through
2 2021, while 8 percent of workers in the United
3 States were employed in computing, engineering,
4 and science occupations, less than 8 percent of Cam-
5 bodian, Filipino, Hmong, and Laotian workers were
6 employed in these occupations. These subgroups are
7 even less represented when compared to all workers
8 of Asian descent. In 2023, nearly 20 percent of all
9 workers of Asian descent who were employed full
10 time in the United States were employed in com-
11 puter, engineering, and science occupations.

12 (13) The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in
13 2023, only 5 percent of Native Hawaiian and other
14 Pacific Islander (NHPI) workers were employed in
15 computing, engineering, and science occupations.

16 (14) Also, according to NCES, Native Hawai-
17 ian and other Pacific Islander (NHPI) STEM de-
18 gree recipients are underrepresented compared with
19 their overall population (0.2 percent of all United
20 States individuals). NHPI students received less
21 than 0.2 percent of all bachelor's degrees, and less
22 than 0.1 percent of master's and doctoral degrees,
23 awarded in STEM from 2020 through 2021.

24 (15) According to research published by the
25 American Association for the Advancement of

1 Science (AAAS), undergraduate students identifying
2 as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) were 7
3 percent less likely to be retained in STEM programs
4 compared with their heterosexual counterparts, de-
5 spite the fact that LGBQ students are 10 percent
6 more likely to participate in undergraduate research
7 experiences, which is a significant contributor to
8 STEM retention absent other factors such as sexual
9 or gender identity, than their heterosexual counter-
10 parts.

11 (16) According to research published by the
12 American Society for Cell Biology, transgender and
13 gender nonconforming undergraduate students, who
14 represent 1 in 14 adults in the United States aged
15 18–24, are 10 percent less likely to remain in STEM
16 majors than their cisgender counterparts.

17 (17) Research published by the AAAS also indi-
18 cates that 22 percent of LGBTQ professionals had
19 thought about leaving their STEM job, compared
20 with 15 percent of non-LGBTQ STEM profes-
21 sionals. Moreover, 12 percent of LGBTQ profes-
22 sionals planned to leave their STEM profession
23 within the next 5 years, compared with 8 percent of
24 non-LGBTQ professionals.

1 (18) Finally, according to the NSF, persons
2 with a disability are underrepresented in the general
3 workforce (4 percent) compared with their represen-
4 tation in the general United States population (9
5 percent), and even less represented in the STEM
6 workforce (3 percent).

7 (b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—The Director of the
8 National Science Foundation shall award grants to eligible
9 entities, on a competitive basis, to enable such eligible en-
10 tities to carry out the activities described in subsection (d),
11 in order to increase the participation of women, persons
12 underrepresented in science and engineering, and persons
13 with disabilities in the fields of science, technology, engi-
14 neering, and mathematics.

15 (c) APPLICATION.—Each eligible entity that desires
16 to receive a grant under this section shall submit an appli-
17 cation to the National Science Foundation at such time,
18 in such manner, and containing such information as the
19 Director of the National Science Foundation may reason-
20 ably require.

21 (d) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—An eligible entity
22 that receives a grant under this section shall use such
23 grant funds to carry out 1 or more of the following activi-
24 ties designed to increase the participation of women, per-
25 sons underrepresented in science and engineering, or per-

1 sons with disabilities, or 2 or more of such groups, in the
2 fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathe-
3 matics:

4 (1) Online workshops.

5 (2) Mentoring programs that partner science,
6 technology, engineering, or mathematics profes-
7 sionals with students.

8 (3) Internships for undergraduate and graduate
9 students in the fields of science, technology, engi-
10 neering, and mathematics.

11 (4) Conducting outreach programs that provide
12 elementary school and secondary school students
13 with opportunities to increase their exposure to the
14 fields of science, technology, engineering, or mathe-
15 matics.

16 (5) Programs to increase the recruitment and
17 retention of underrepresented faculty.

18 (6) Such additional programs as the Director of
19 the National Science Foundation may determine.

20 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

21 (1) MINORITY.—The term “minority” means
22 American Indian, Alaskan Native, Black (not of His-
23 panic origin), Hispanic (including persons of Mexi-
24 can, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South
25 American origin), Asian (including underrepresented

1 subgroups), Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander origin
2 subgroup, or other ethnic group underrepresented in
3 science and engineering, or lesbian, gay, bisexual,
4 transgender, or queer (LGBTQ), or gender-noncon-
5 forming.

6 (2) PERSON WITH A DISABILITY.—The term
7 “person with a disability” means an individual with
8 1 or more disability types as defined by the U.S.
9 Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (CPS).

10 (3) UNDERREPRESENTED IN SCIENCE AND EN-
11 GINEERING.—The term “underrepresented in science
12 and engineering” means a minority group whose
13 number of scientists and engineers per 10,000 popu-
14 lation of that group is substantially below the com-
15 parable figure for scientists and engineers who are
16 White and not of Hispanic origin.

17 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
18 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
19 \$15,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026, 2027, 2028,
20 2029, and 2030.