

NAPE PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORMS



H.R 1591: 21st Century STEM for Girls and Underrepresented Minorities Act of 2019

Summary

Introduced by House Committee on Education and Labor member *Congresswoman Joyce Beatty (D-OH)* on March 7, 2019, the 21st Century STEM for Girls and Underrepresented Minorities Act (also known as the 21st Century STEM Act) would amend Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize the Secretary of Education to provide grants to local educational agencies to, on a competitive basis, pay the costs of carrying out STEM education activities to improve the education of girls and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and prepare them to pursue degrees and careers in these fields.

This legislation includes a provision to ensure that the distribution of grants will be targeted to areas with high need and high poverty.

STEM-related industries are booming in job growth, high wages, and low unemployment. There is an increasing demand for such workers at a time when unemployment and under-employment remain among the most pressing issues facing our nation. Compare the 3.3% unemployment rate in computer science and mathematics, for example, to the national unemployment rate, which stands at roughly 6.0%. (*Beatty, 2019*)

However, STEM fields remain plagued by an acute shortage in the supply of skilled STEM workers, a situation that is particularly pronounced among underrepresented minorities and women. According to the Congressional Research Service, a wide variety of data on STEM education “show disparities by race, ethnicity, and gender in test scores, degree attainment, and employment.” Test results for the NAEP mathematics assessments for the 4th and 8th grades, for example, reveal a 20-point gap between whites and underrepresented minorities. (*Beatty, 2019*)

Why This Is Important to NAPE

Women, who are earning college degrees in increasing numbers, still hold less than one-quarter of STEM jobs nationally. (*Beatty, 2019*) This legislation expands education opportunities for women and students (of all ages) of color. Among its many attribute, the bill would provide professional development for teachers and

other school personnel to eliminate gender and racial bias in the classroom; encourage sensitivity to gender and racial differences; and engage students in the face of gender-based and racial peer pressure and parental expectations.

The legislation provides resources through the grant for equipment and hardware for teaching STEM subjects to girls and underrepresented minorities to encourage their interest. The grant also pays up to 50 percent of the cost of an internship in a STEM discipline for female and underrepresented minority students.

Current Status

The legislation was introduced on March 7, 2019, and was referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. As of April 15, 2019, the legislation has 14 co-sponsors.

Bibliography

Beatty, Jo. (2019, March 22). *Become an Original Co-sponsor of the 21st Century STEM Act of 2019 – Help increase Diversity & Inclusion in STEM (H.R.1591)*. Retrieved April 22, 2019, from Dear Colleague 21st Century STEM ACT: <http://dearcolleague.us/2019/03/become-an-original-co-sponsor-of-the-21st-century-stem-act-of-2019-help-increase-diversity-inclusion-in-stem-h-r-1591/>