

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

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

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an initiative to address the availability, quality, and cost of childcare in rural areas, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. MARSHALL (for himself, Ms. SMITH, Ms. HASSAN, and Ms. ERNST) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an initiative to address the availability, quality, and cost of childcare in rural areas, 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. EXPANDING CHILDCARE IN RURAL AMERICA**  
4 **INITIATIVE.**

5 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 (1) CHILDCARE.—

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

(i) provides quality care and early education for children who have not yet entered first grade; and

(ii) is operated by—

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

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

(aa) is licensed, regulated, or registered in the State, territory of the United States, or territory of the Indian Tribe in which the provider is located; and

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

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

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

(ii) a program described in subparagraph (A) that is a Head Start program,

1 including a migrant and seasonal Head  
2 Start program, or an American Indian and  
3 Alaska Native Head Start program carried  
4 out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C.  
5 9831 et seq.);

6 (iii) a facility used for a program de-  
7 scribed in subparagraph (A); and

8 (iv) a service provided under a pro-  
9 gram described in subparagraph (A).

10 (2) INITIATIVE.—The term “Initiative” means  
11 the Expanding Childcare in Rural America Initiative  
12 established under subsection (b).

13 (3) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area” has  
14 the meaning given the term in section 343(a)(13)(A)  
15 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development  
16 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(A)).

17 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
18 the Secretary of Agriculture.

19 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish  
20 an initiative, to be known as the “Expanding Childcare  
21 in Rural America Initiative”, under which the Secretary  
22 shall provide, for each of fiscal years 2027 through 2029,  
23 priority in accordance with subsection (c) to address the  
24 availability, quality, and cost of childcare in rural areas.

25 (c) CHILDCARE PRIORITIES.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other  
2           provision of law, in selecting recipients of loans and  
3           grants under a program described in paragraph (2),  
4           the Secretary shall give priority to any qualified ap-  
5           plicant that proposes to use the loan or grant to ad-  
6           dress the availability, quality, or cost of childcare in  
7           a rural area.

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

10           (A) The essential community facilities loan  
11           and grant programs authorized under section  
12           306(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural  
13           Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1926(a)).

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

17           (C) The rural microentrepreneur assistance  
18           program authorized under section 379E of that  
19           Act (7 U.S.C. 2008s).

20           (D) The intermediary relending program  
21           authorized under section 310H of that Act (7  
22           U.S.C. 1936b).

23           (d) REQUIREMENT.—In providing funding in accord-  
24           ance with the Initiative, the Secretary shall ensure a bal-

1 anced geographical distribution of the benefits under the  
2 Initiative.

3 (e) EVALUATION; REPORT.—

4 (1) EVALUATION.—Not later than 3 years after  
5 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
6 shall conduct a comprehensive quantitative and qual-  
7 itative evaluation of the projects carried out using  
8 assistance provided under the Initiative, including—

9 (A) a description of—

10 (i) the types of projects carried out;

11 (ii) the communities in which the  
12 projects are carried out;

13 (iii) the organizations and entities  
14 participating in the projects; and

15 (iv) the types of partnerships devel-  
16 oped to carry out the projects; and

17 (B) the economic and social impacts of the  
18 investments in the projects.

19 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 4 years after the  
20 date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall  
21 submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,  
22 and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee on  
23 Agriculture of the House of Representatives a report  
24 describing the evaluation conducted under paragraph

- 1 (1), including a thorough analysis of the outcomes of
- 2 the evaluation.