

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to create an innovation zone initiative, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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

A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to create an innovation zone initiative, 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 “Innovation Zone Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. INNOVATION ZONE INITIATIVE AUTHORITY.**

6 Section 487A of the Higher Education Act of 1965
7 (20 U.S.C. 1094a) is amended to read as follows:

8 **“SEC. 487A. INNOVATION ZONE INITIATIVE.**

9 “(a) INNOVATION ZONE INITIATIVE.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary is authorized
2 to establish an innovation zone initiative consisting
3 of voluntary experiments under which the Secretary
4 and institutions of higher education are permitted to
5 test the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory
6 flexibility that aims to achieve the following out-
7 comes:

8 “(A) Increase in student success, which
9 may be defined as one or more of the following:

10 “(i) Reduction in student loan debt.

11 “(ii) Increase in student retention and
12 program completion at institutions of high-
13 er education.

14 “(iii) Increase in student job place-
15 ment rate upon graduation.

16 “(iv) Improved financial aid disburse-
17 ment and service to students.

18 “(v) Increase in student safety,
19 wellness, or food and housing security.

20 “(vi) Other innovative practices that
21 benefit students.

22 “(B) Reduction of regulatory burden on in-
23 stitutions of higher education or the Depart-
24 ment, without harm to students.

1 “(2) WAIVERS.—The Secretary is authorized to
2 waive, for any institution of higher education partici-
3 pating in an innovation zone experiment under para-
4 graph (1), 1 or more requirements of title I or IV.

5 “(b) SOLICITATION OF EXPERIMENT SUGGES-
6 TIONS.—

7 “(1) SOLICITATION OF SUGGESTIONS.—Not less
8 frequently than every 2 years, the Secretary shall
9 provide an opportunity for the public, institutions of
10 higher education, and other stakeholders to submit
11 suggestions for potential experiments under this sec-
12 tion.

13 “(2) CONTENTS OF SUGGESTIONS.—Any person
14 that wishes to submit a suggestion under paragraph
15 (1) shall include—

16 “(A) the goals or objectives of the pro-
17 posed experiment;

18 “(B) a description of how the experiment
19 would be conducted, including participation pro-
20 tections;

21 “(C) the specific statutory or regulatory
22 requirements for which a waiver would be re-
23 quested; and

1 “(D) an examination of the current need
2 or interest, as of the date of the submission, for
3 the experiment.

4 “(c) SELECTION OF EXPERIMENTS AND DESIGNA-
5 TION OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS.—

6 “(1) SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS.—After con-
7 sidering any suggestions submitted under subsection
8 (b), the Secretary may select experiments to be car-
9 ried out under subsection (a). The Secretary shall
10 base any such selection on the following:

11 “(A) Sufficient interest in the experiment
12 among institutions of higher education, re-
13 searchers, and practitioners.

14 “(B) Promising evidence of fulfilling out-
15 comes described in subsection (a)(1).

16 “(C) Other general interest, as supported
17 by evidence.

18 “(2) DETERMINATION OF EVALUATION
19 PLANS.—After selecting an experiment under this
20 section, but before any participating institutions for
21 such experiment are chosen, the Secretary shall com-
22 plete the following:

23 “(A) Identify answerable questions for the
24 experiment and design an experiment that can
25 measure those answers.

1 “(B) Identify the methodology of data col-
2 lection for the experiment.

3 “(C) Identify rigorous evaluation methods
4 for the experiment, in partnership with the In-
5 stitute of Education Sciences, that are informed
6 by—

7 “(i) external researchers;

8 “(ii) responses to requests from the
9 Department for information; and

10 “(iii) other opportunities for stake-
11 holder feedback.

12 “(D) Establish a timeframe for conducting
13 the experiment that shall not exceed 10 years.

14 “(E) Estimate the cost of conducting the
15 experiment.

16 “(F) Estimate the necessary size of the
17 treatment group needed to have statistically sig-
18 nificant grants.

19 “(3) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—The
20 Secretary shall notify institutions of higher edu-
21 cation, through the website of the Department or
22 other means, of the experiments selected by the Sec-
23 retary under this section and the steps necessary to
24 participate in an experiment. Such notice shall in-
25 clude the information described in subparagraphs

1 (A) through (F) of paragraph (2) for the experi-
2 ment.

3 “(4) COMMENCEMENT OF EXPERIMENT.—The
4 Secretary may carry out an experiment, in accord-
5 ance with the requirements of this section, only if
6 the Secretary has entered into agreements with not
7 less than 5, and not more than 100, institutions of
8 higher education, under which the institutions
9 agree—

10 “(A) to participate in the experiment de-
11 scribed in the applicable evaluation plan under
12 paragraph (2);

13 “(B) to comply with the data collection re-
14 quirements under subsection (d)(1) and any
15 other reporting requirements determined by the
16 Secretary; and

17 “(C)(i) to the methodology for data collec-
18 tion established by the Secretary under para-
19 graph (2)(B) for the experiment; or

20 “(ii) upon the request of the institution
21 and if the Secretary determines appropriate, to
22 an alternative methodology for data collection.

23 “(5) FAST-TRACK PROCESS TO COMPLY WITH
24 INFORMATION COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS.—Not-
25 withstanding section 3507 of title 44, United States

1 Code, the Secretary shall be deemed to have the au-
2 thority to approve, for purposes of such section
3 3507, any proposed collection of information related
4 to an experiment conducted under this section, in
5 the same manner and to the same extent as such au-
6 thority is provided to a senior official by the Direc-
7 tor of the Office of Management and Budget under
8 section 3507(i) of such title.

9 “(d) OUTCOMES REPORTING.—

10 “(1) DATA SUBMISSION.—Each institution of
11 higher education participating in an experiment
12 under this section shall timely submit to the Sec-
13 retary, on a periodic basis to be determined by the
14 Secretary, data on outcomes relating to the experi-
15 ment.

16 “(2) REPORT.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

18 “(i) review and evaluate the experi-
19 ence of all institutions participating in
20 each experiment carried out under this sec-
21 tion; and

22 “(ii) beginning 2 years after the date
23 of enactment of the Innovation Zone Act,
24 and every 2 years thereafter—

1 “(I) prepare and submit a report
2 regarding the innovation zone initia-
3 tive under this section to the author-
4 izing committees; and

5 “(II) post the report on the pub-
6 lic website of the Department.

7 “(B) CONTENTS OF REPORT.—The report
8 required under subparagraph (A)(ii)(I) shall in-
9 clude, for each experiment supported as of the
10 date of the report—

11 “(i) a summary of the status of the
12 experiment;

13 “(ii) a summary and analysis of the
14 findings, to date, of the experiment;

15 “(iii) the methodology of data collec-
16 tion;

17 “(iv) an analysis of the value of con-
18 tinuation of the experiment;

19 “(v) an explanation of any current or
20 foreseen barriers to conducting the experi-
21 ment; and

22 “(vi) an evaluation of the quality of
23 data and intended results.

24 “(C) COMPLETED EXPERIMENT REPORT.—

25 By not later than 30 days after the completion

1 of the timeframe established under subsection
2 (e)(2)(D) or (e)(2)(B)(ii) for an experiment, the
3 Secretary shall—

4 “(i) prepare a report that includes—

5 “(I) the findings of the experi-
6 ment; and

7 “(II) in the case of an experi-
8 ment for which the Secretary deter-
9 mines there is sufficient value in con-
10 tinuing the experiment past the estab-
11 lished timeframe, adequate docu-
12 mentation to justify such continu-
13 ation; and

14 “(ii) publish the report on the public
15 website of the Department and submit the
16 report to the authorizing committees.

17 “(e) TRANSITION; REVIEW.—

18 “(1) CONTINUATION OF EXISTING EXPERI-
19 MENTS.—The Secretary may continue any experi-
20 ment commenced under this section before the date
21 of enactment of the Innovation Zone Act (referred to
22 in this subsection as an ‘existing experiment’). Any
23 such existing experiment shall be subject to the re-
24 quirements of this section, as amended by the Inno-

1 vation Zone Act, except for the requirements of sub-
2 section (c).

3 “(2) REVIEW OF EXISTING EXPERIMENTS.—By
4 not later than 90 days after the date of enactment
5 of the Innovation Zone Act, the Secretary shall—

6 “(A) conduct an extensive review and as-
7 sessment of existing experiments still in effect;
8 and

9 “(B) prepare and submit to the author-
10 izing committees, and publish on the public
11 website of the Department, a report of the sta-
12 tus of the existing experiments, which shall in-
13 clude, for each such experiment—

14 “(i) the total cost to date and the pro-
15 jected cost of continuation;

16 “(ii) an established timeframe for
17 completion;

18 “(iii) the current methodology of data
19 collection;

20 “(iv) an analysis of findings, as of the
21 date of the report;

22 “(v) an analysis of the value in con-
23 tinuation of the existing experiment; and

24 “(vi) an analysis of whether the as-
25 sessment of the experiment could be re-

1 structured to answer other policy ques-
2 tions.”.