

117TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

H. R. 1500

To direct the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to submit to Congress a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global basic education programs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 2, 2021

Ms. HOULAHAN (for herself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Mr. QUIGLEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

- To direct the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to submit to Congress a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global basic education programs.
 - 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 "Global Learning Loss
 - 5 Assessment Act of 2021".
 - 6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.
 - 7 Congress makes the following findings:

- 1 (1) Before the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (com2 monly referred to as "COVID-19") pandemic began,
 3 258,000,000 children were out of school, including
 4 130,000,000 girls.
 - (2) Students already at a disadvantage before COVID-19 will experience greater learning loss, thereby worsening inequity and inequality.
 - (3) Approximately 90 percent of the world's student population—over 1,600,000,000 children and youth—have had their education disrupted by school closure due to COVID-19.
 - (4) School closures lead to interrupted learning, poor nutrition, gaps in childcare, increased dropout rates, exposure to violence, and social isolation.
 - (5) Up to 24,000,000 children are at risk of dropping out of school permanently due to rising levels of child poverty associated with the pandemic.
 - (6) School closure and remote learning is especially burdensome on girls, who are frequently expected to shoulder more household chores and responsibilities and are more vulnerable to gender-based violence.
 - (7) During the Ebola epidemic, nationwide school closures in Sierra Leone in 2014 led to increased instances of sexual- and gender-based vio-

- lence, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and child
 labor for girls.
 - (8) More than 60 percent of national distance learning alternatives rely exclusively on online platforms but two-thirds of the world's school aged children, or 1,300,000,000 children aged 3–17, do not have internet connection in their homes, and schools and local learning centers also frequently have inadequate internet connectivity. Eighty percent of students in sub-Saharan Africa lack such access, with an even higher rate for girls.
 - (9) Children and youth with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the health, education, and socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. As a further challenge, distance learning tools are not always accessible to learners with disabilities or those with complex learning needs, especially in poorer and rural households.
 - (10) Before the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee children were twice as likely to be out of school as other youth, and school closures and a lack of access to distance learning tools threaten to make the education gap among refugee children even more severe.
 - (11) The economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to an education fi-

1	nancing gap of \$77,000,000,000 in low- and middle-
2	income countries over the next two years.
3	(12) The economic cost of school closures could
4	be up to \$1,337 per student, which on a global scale
5	equates to approximately \$10,000,000,000,000 in
6	lost economic output over the coming generation.
7	SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.
8	It is the policy of the United States that United
9	States-funded basic education programs operating in for-
10	eign countries should—
11	(1) provide inclusive learning opportunities for
12	students and teachers, especially for the most
13	marginalized, including girls, children with disabil-
14	ities, and previously out of school children;
15	(2) build local capacity and help countries
16	strengthen their education systems, including oppor-
17	tunities for early childhood development;
18	(3) improve the availability, delivery, and qual-
19	ity of education services from early childhood
20	through secondary education;
21	(4) improve equity and safety in education serv-
22	ices; and
23	(5) support the return of children to school who
24	have experienced interruptions in their education
25	due to the COVID-19 pandemic and work to enroll

- 1 previously out-of-school children and youth, particu-
- 2 larly the most marginalized.

3 SEC. 4. REPORT.

- 4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
- 5 date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of
- 6 the United States Agency for International Development,
- 7 acting through the Senior Coordinator for International
- 8 Basic Education Assistance and in consultation with the
- 9 Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's
- 10 Empowerment, shall submit to the appropriate congres-
- 11 sional committees a report on the impact of the COVID-
- 12 19 pandemic on the Agency's basic education programs.
- 13 (b) Matters To Be Included.—The report re-
- 14 quired under subsection (a) shall include, at a minimum,
- 15 the following elements:
- 16 (1) An assessment of the magnitude of learning
- loss that will result from protracted school closures,
- including the specific effects of school and learning
- space closures on marginalized children and youth,
- 20 including girls, minority populations, displaced chil-
- dren, and those with disabilities.
- 22 (2) Descriptions of the effectiveness, cost, ac-
- cessibility, and reach of the most commonly used
- forms of distance learning in low resource contexts.

- (3) An overview of Agency programs being carried out to continue learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, including existing data on funding and programmatic focus disaggregated by gender, country, education level, and disability.
 - (4) Identification and description of any gaps in, or barriers to, reaching and educating marginalized populations, such as girls, children with disabilities, displaced children, or other children adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with distance learning interventions.
 - (5) A description of the Agency's plan and needed tools and resources to support continued distance learning interventions, safe school reopening, assessments of student learning levels, remedial and accelerated learning, reenrollment campaigns for out-of-school children and youth, and education system strengthening and resilience building efforts.
 - (6) An analysis of the efforts of other actors in global basic education policy and programming to provide education during COVID-19, including partner organizations, donors, and bilateral and multilateral organizations, and the role of the Agency in those efforts.

1	(7) Opportunities to partner and support ef-
2	forts to expand access to digital infrastructure,
3	internet connectivity, and learning resources in areas
4	that lack access to digital and remote learning infra-
5	structure and resources, including rural and remote
6	communities.
7	(e) Public Availability.—The report required by
8	subsection (a) shall be made available to the public.
9	(d) Appropriate Congressional Committees
10	Defined.—In this section, the term "appropriate con-
11	gressional committees" means—
12	(1) the Committee on Foreign Relations and
13	the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and
14	(2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the
15	Committee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
16	resentatives.

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