

Inspiring New STEM Professionals by Investing in Renovation of Education Spaces (INSPIRES) ACT of 2015

The INSPIRES Act provides resources to help schools and community colleges update the career and technical education and STEM facilities necessary to prepare students for 21st century careers.

Over the past decade, the growth in jobs requiring sophisticated science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills was three times faster than growth in non-STEM jobs. U.S. employers have continued to struggle to fill jobs in fields such as computing, manufacturing, and energy. Over 50% of jobs that require STEM skills do not require a bachelor's degree – and there is growing recognition by teachers, schools, and education stakeholders nationwide that Career and Technical Education (CTE) will be instrumental in the effort to meet the urgent demand for a STEM-literate workforce. Yet many of our public schools and community colleges lack the modern facilities needed to prepare students with the STEM skills and training required for these high demand, well-paying careers. Senator Schatz is introducing the INSPIRES Act to provide public schools and community colleges with dedicated funding for updating and upgrading their facilities, enabling them to provide high quality STEM and CTE instruction.

How could public schools and community colleges use the funding?

- Modernization, renovation, or repair of a facility used to improve the quality and availability of STEM or CTE instruction, which may include
 - Retrofitting an existing building for STEM/CTE purposes;
 - Installing or improving educational technology infrastructure;
 - One-time repair or replacement of equipment required for CTE or STEM programs;
 - Improving the energy efficiency of a STEM/CTE facility;
 - Improving the cost-effectiveness of the facility for delivering quality education;
 - Improving the facility to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff.
- Funds cannot be used for new construction or for routine maintenance costs.

How would funding be distributed?

- Eligible entities, including local educational agencies (LEAs) and community colleges, may apply for grants from the Secretary of Education describing the proposed project and the educational outcomes that will be furthered by the qualified project.
- The Secretary will provide support to selected projects in the form of grants, loan guarantees, or by making interest payments on financial instruments issued to the eligible entities, as requested by the applicant entity.
- At least 25% of the funds made available under this Act must be directed to high-need LEAs or to community colleges that serve a substantial number of rural students.

If you have any questions or your boss would like to sign on, please contact Reba Bandyopadhyay (reba_bandyopadhyay@schatz.senate.gov) or Mika Morse (mika_morse@schatz.senate.gov) in Senator Schatz's office.