

116TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 4548

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.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. BOOZMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## 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 2020”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress makes the following findings:

1           (1) Before the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (com-  
2           monly referred to as “COVID–19”) pandemic began,  
3           258,000,000 children were out of school, including  
4           130,000,000 girls.

5           (2) Students already at a disadvantage before  
6           COVID–19 will experience greater learning loss,  
7           thereby worsening inequity and inequality.

8           (3) Approximately 90 percent of the world’s  
9           student population—over 1,700,000,000 children  
10          and youth—have had their education disrupted by  
11          school closure due to COVID–19.

12          (4) School closures lead to interrupted learning,  
13          poor nutrition, gaps in childcare, increased dropout  
14          rates, exposure to violence, and social isolation.

15          (5) Up to 9,700,000 children are at risk of  
16          dropping out of school permanently due to rising lev-  
17          els of child poverty associated with the pandemic.

18          (6) School closure and remote learning is espe-  
19          cially burdensome on girls, who are frequently ex-  
20          pected to shoulder more household chores and re-  
21          sponsibilities, and are more vulnerable to gender-  
22          based violence.

23          (7) During the Ebola epidemic, nationwide  
24          school closures in Sierra Leone in 2014 led to in-  
25          creased instances of sexual- and gender-based vio-

1 lence, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and child  
2 labor for girls.

3 (8) Over 60 percent of national distance learn-  
4 ing alternatives rely exclusively on online platforms  
5 but as many as 465,000,000 children and young  
6 people in these countries do not have access to the  
7 internet at home, with 80 percent of students in  
8 sub-Saharan Africa without such access, and an  
9 even higher rate for girls.

10 (9) Distance learning tools are not always ac-  
11 cessible to learners with disabilities or those with  
12 complex learning needs, especially in poorer and  
13 rural households.

14 (10) Before the COVID–19 pandemic, refugee  
15 children were twice as likely to be out of school as  
16 other youth, and school closures and a lack of access  
17 to distance learning tools threaten to make the edu-  
18 cation gap among refugee children even more severe.

19 (11) The economic downturn caused by the  
20 COVID–19 pandemic could lead to an education fi-  
21 nancing gap of \$77,000,000,000 in low- and middle-  
22 income countries over the next two years.

23 (12) The economic cost of school closures could  
24 be up to \$1,337 per student, which on a global scale

1 equates to approximately \$10,000,000,000,000 in  
2 lost economic output over the coming generation.

3 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

4 It is the policy of the United States that United  
5 States-funded basic education programs operating in for-  
6 eign countries should—

7 (1) provide inclusive learning opportunities for  
8 students and teachers, especially for the most  
9 marginalized, including girls and children with dis-  
10 abilities;

11 (2) build local capacity and help countries  
12 strengthen their education systems;

13 (3) improve the delivery and quality of edu-  
14 cation services;

15 (4) improve equity and safety in education serv-  
16 ices; and

17 (5) support the return of children to school who  
18 have experienced interruptions in their education  
19 due to the COVID–19 pandemic and other causes.

20 **SEC. 4. REPORT.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the  
22 date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of  
23 the United States Agency for International Development,  
24 acting through the Senior Coordinator for International  
25 Basic Education Assistance and in consultation with the

1 Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's  
2 Empowerment, shall submit to the appropriate congres-  
3 sional committees a report on the impact of the COVID-  
4 19 pandemic on global learning and basic education pro-  
5 grams.

6 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The report re-  
7 quired under subsection (a) shall include, at a minimum,  
8 the following elements:

9 (1) An assessment of the magnitude of global  
10 learning loss that will result from protracted school  
11 closures, including the specific effects of school clo-  
12 sures on marginalized children and youth, including  
13 girls, minority populations, and those with disabil-  
14 ities.

15 (2) Descriptions of the effectiveness, cost, ac-  
16 cessibility, and reach of the most commonly used  
17 forms of distance learning in low resource contexts.

18 (3) An overview of existing Agency programs  
19 being carried out to continue learning during the  
20 COVID-19 pandemic, including data on funding and  
21 programmatic focus disaggregated by gender, coun-  
22 try, education level, and, when practicable and ap-  
23 propriate, disability.

24 (4) Identification of any gaps in reaching  
25 marginalized populations, such as girls, children

1 with disabilities, or children affected by conflict and  
2 crisis.

3 (5) A description of the tools and resources  
4 needed for the Agency to support continued distance  
5 learning interventions, safe school reopening, reme-  
6 dial and accelerated learning, and reenrollment cam-  
7 paigns for out-of-school children and youth.

8 (c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The report required by  
9 subsection (a) shall be made available to the public.

10 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES  
11 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-  
12 gressional committees” means—

13 (1) the Committee on Foreign Relations and  
14 the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

15 (2) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the  
16 Committee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-  
17 resentatives.

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