

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 856

To allow State manufacturing extension partnerships to award grants to small- and medium-sized manufacturers for the purpose of training new workers to replace departing experienced workers.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 25, 2019

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. INHOFE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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## A BILL

To allow State manufacturing extension partnerships to award grants to small- and medium-sized manufacturers for the purpose of training new workers to replace departing experienced workers.

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 “Retain Innovation and  
5 Manufacturing Excellence (RIME) Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1           (1) CENTER.—The term “Center” has the  
2           meaning given the term in section 25(a) of the Na-  
3           tional Institute of Standards and Technology Act  
4           (15 U.S.C. 278k(a)).

5           (2) ELIGIBLE MANUFACTURERS.—The term  
6           “eligible manufacturer” means a manufacturer  
7           that—

8                       (A) is a small business concern, as that  
9                       term is defined under section 3 of the Small  
10                      Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632); and

11                     (B) has an existing relationship with a  
12                      Center.

13 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM.**

14           (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce shall  
15           establish a pilot program to award National Institute of  
16           Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension  
17           Partnership (MEP) grants to help ensure an adequately  
18           trained manufacturing workforce. Under the program, eli-  
19           gible Centers may award MEP grants to eligible manufac-  
20           turers to retain retiring employees for up to 90 days for  
21           the purpose of transferring job-specific skills and training  
22           to existing or new employees. The length of each grant  
23           shall be determined through negotiations between the Cen-  
24           ter and the eligible manufacturer.

1 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—In order to be eligible to receive  
2 funding and award grants under the program, a Center  
3 must meet the following criteria:

4 (1) A Center must be able to document evi-  
5 dence of an aging workforce within manufacturing  
6 firms that are seeking assistance with retaining  
7 skills and knowledge of their operations.

8 (2) A Center shall establish a transparent appli-  
9 cation process for eligible manufacturing firms that  
10 may include one or more of the following pref-  
11 erences:

12 (A) A preference for manufacturers that  
13 employ veterans discharged or released under  
14 honorable conditions.

15 (B) A preference for manufacturing firms  
16 from industry sectors that are most in need of  
17 assistance as determined by the local MEP.

18 (C) A preference for manufacturing firms  
19 with a facility in the State or region for an ex-  
20 tended period of time before the application is  
21 submitted (as determined by the Center).

22 (D) A preference for manufacturing firms  
23 that have an existing relationship with the local  
24 MEP.

1           (3) A Center must be able to demonstrate their  
2           ability to assess, advise and train manufacturers on  
3           how to transfer the job-specific skills and training  
4           through the implementation of a training structure  
5           and train-the-trainer program focused on knowledge  
6           capture and transfer.

7           (c) TRAINING.—In awarding grants pursuant to this  
8           section, consideration shall be given to the use of funds  
9           by Centers to assist manufacturers that are experiencing  
10          high employee turnover due to their inability to transfer  
11          required job-specific skills and training to new employees  
12          with the implementation of training structures and train-  
13          the-trainer programs.

14          (d) COST SHARING.—To be eligible for a grant under  
15          the pilot program under this section, a Center shall dem-  
16          onstrate that 50 percent of the amount of the funds  
17          awarded are matched from non-Federal sources. Those  
18          sources may include State and local agencies engaged in  
19          workforce development, foundations engaged in workforce  
20          development, or an in-kind contribution from an employer  
21          that would stand to directly benefit from the grant re-  
22          ceived by the Center.

23          (e) NUMBER AND SIZE OF AWARDS.—

24                  (1) NUMBER.—The Secretary may award up to  
25          25 grants to Centers under the pilot program.

1           (2) SIZE.—Each award under the program  
2           shall be for not less than \$50,000 and not more  
3           than \$500,000.

4           (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
5           authorized to be appropriated to the National Institute of  
6           Standards and Technology \$10,000,000 to carry out the  
7           pilot program.

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