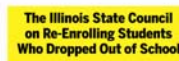


HOPEUSA

HOPE & OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS through EDUCATION
Helping High School Dropouts Leave the Streets and Return to School



Co-Sponsors

Jobs for the Future Los Angeles Conservation Corps National Youth Employment Coalition The Corps Network YouthBuild USA

THE HOPE USA FEDERAL INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

“My budget invests in developing...new efforts to give dropouts who want to return to school the help they need to graduate; and new ways to put those young men and women who have left school back on a pathway to graduation.”

President Barack Obama, March 10, 2009

BACKGROUND

America is currently in the throes of a high school dropout crisis. According to the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, Mass., in 2007, there were millions of high school dropouts in the U.S. between the ages of 16 and 24. In the current global economy, a college degree is a prerequisite for a well-paying job. Thus, the costs of dropping out of high school today are significant, especially for young men and working parents, who find it almost impossible to earn an adequate income to take care of themselves and their families.

Because of the widespread, pressing nature of the dropout crisis, only by addressing the problem nationally can there be any hope of solving it. The Hope & Opportunity Pathways through Education (HOPE USA) incentive grant plan is being jointly proposed by the National Education Association, National Urban League, Illinois State Council on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School, Chicago Urban League, Alternative Schools Network, and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services to develop pathways for high school dropouts to return to school and earn their high school diploma.

HOPE USA FEDERAL INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

To address the dropout crisis nationally, the HOPE USA federal incentive grant program will spur state and local school districts to roll out programs to re-enroll high-school dropouts into comprehensive programs to assist them to earn a high school diploma. The grant program's aim is to re-enroll more than 480,000 dropouts each year via comprehensive small-school initiatives (80-150 students) led by experienced principals and teachers, focused on real-world learning, and accompanied by summer and after-school components and year-round employment programs. Key points of the grant program include:

Funding Incentives: HOPE USA would be a **\$2 billion annual federal incentive grant program** to support the creation of diverse programs to re-enroll students, with a **50/50 match of federal funds to state and local monies**. Sub-federal monies would come from increases in daily attendance funds generated by students who are newly re-enrolled by the program. Programs would be designed locally, funded at the average district high school per student cost, and have local fiscal determination.

Aid Where Aid Is Needed: HOPE USA federal funds would be distributed proportionally, based on a given state's share of the total number of dropouts across the country. Accurate, detailed dropout data are readily available at the state and federal levels to accomplish such a distribution of funds.

Policy Incentives: Existing national policies that would pose a barrier for states to participate in HOPE USA would be revised or replaced to provide incentives for districts to re-enroll high-risk dropouts. Specifically: NCLB measures requiring that school districts meet target achievement rates would be revised to allow older, lower-skilled dropouts to be re-enrolled without penalty; new growth-gain performance measures would be developed to measure student re-enrollment, attendance, skill and credit gains, promotions, graduations, and transitions;

and re-enrolled students who drop out a second time would not be counted against school district or state dropout rates.

BENEFITS OF THE HOPE USA INITIATIVE

Students: Re-enrolled students will earn \$400,000 more in their lifetimes with a high school diploma than as dropouts. This additional income can help lift earners and their families out of poverty and into economically stable lives with a real chance to succeed.

Taxpayers: Over their lifetime, each re-enrolled and graduated student will save taxpayers more than \$250,000 through lower social costs such as health care, welfare, and incarceration, and by earning higher salaries and thus paying more local, state and federal taxes. The savings for taxpayers of 350,000 high school dropouts re-enrolling and graduating is \$1.9 billion in annual savings and \$87 billion over the lifetime of these re-enrolled and graduated dropouts.

A NATIONAL FORUM

On Tuesday, May 5, 2009, the HOPE USA coalition will convene ***Helping High School Dropouts Leave the Streets and Return to School***, a forum to discuss national solutions to the dropout crisis at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. with keynote speaker, Jo Anderson, Jr., Senior Adviser to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan. It is the coalition's hope for the forum to lead to real strategies for getting our nation's children back in school and on track for successful careers.

For more information, please email info@asnchicago.org or call 773.728.4030 ext. 0.

###