

COMMITTEE REPORTS

112TH CONGRESS (2011-2012)

SENATE REPORT 112-084

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION,
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATION BILL,

2012

PROMISE: Promoting Reading of Minors in SSI

The Committee recommendation includes \$4,000,000 for the PROMISE program and makes these funds available for obligation through September 30, 2013. The budget request includes \$30,000,000 for this new activity. The Committee provides additional support for PROMISE through \$10,000,000 for the Social Security Administration and the authority to use unobligated Vocational Rehabilitation State grant funds for the PROMISE program. The Committee intends to provide additional funds for this program in fiscal year 2013 as the planning and grant competition process described below moves forward and helps identify any additional funding needed to accomplish the goal of this program.

The goal of the PROMISE program is to improve outcomes of children who receive Supplemental Security Income [SSI], as well as their families. The Committee is aware of the research showing that less than half of 17- and 18-year-olds receiving SSI had worked during ages 16-17, almost 60 percent of child SSI recipients who turn 18, and become ineligible for child benefits, immediately continue receiving benefits as an adult, and fewer than a quarter of SSI youth ages 14-17 or their parents know about various work incentives available to them. The PROMISE program will primarily address the barriers preventing more positive outcomes for youths receiving SSI by encouraging innovation through better coordination between existing programs and services. The program will provide such youth with more intense and coordinated services, particularly around the transition to competitive, integrated employment, completion of postsecondary education, and other activities that are likely to reduce the likelihood of future dependency on SSI. The program also intends to help families of child SSI recipients through improved services and supports such as education and training.

The Department, in cooperation with the Social Security Administration and Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, may use funds provided in this bill to undertake a thorough planning process that includes consultation with experts on the relevant research base and possible program outcome measures as well as engagement with stakeholders on the research base and promising models, barriers to better uses of funds and improved outcomes, and possible approaches to evaluation of the PROMISE program. The goal of the process is to help the administration design and implement a program that will award grants to States that have proposed projects that have the greatest potential for transformational impact, including through the better use of existing resources and services, and to develop information that can improve program delivery and outcomes in all States and localities, including those that do not receive PROMISE pilot funding.

The Committee expects the administration to update the Committees on Appropriations, Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and Finance of its activities related to the PROMISE program. Such notification and consultation shall occur no later than 30 days after conclusion of the review of relevant research and engagement with stakeholders. If the administration determines, based on stakeholder input, that legislation is required to allow waivers of statutory barriers, the administration will request legislative authority to grant such waivers at least 60 days prior to their proposed issuance or announcement in notices of priorities or funding availability. Such requests should also explain the full range of administrative, regulatory and legislative flexibilities that would be granted by Federal agencies and the safeguards that would be instituted to protect program beneficiaries and taxpayers.