

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To provide grants for tourism and events support and promotion in areas affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19), and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Mr. BLUNT, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. CRAMER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To provide grants for tourism and events support and promotion in areas affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19), and for other purposes.

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 “Sustaining Tourism
5 Enterprises During the COVID–19 Pandemic Act” or the
6 “STEP Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. TOURISM AND EVENTS SUPPORT AND PROMOTION.**

2 Title II of the Public Works and Economic Develop-
3 ment Act of 1965 is amended by inserting after section
4 207 (42 U.S.C. 3147) the following:

5 **“SEC. 208. TOURISM AND EVENTS SUPPORT AND PRO-**
6 **MOTION.**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the
8 date of enactment of the Sustaining Tourism Enterprises
9 During the COVID–19 Pandemic Act, the Secretary shall
10 provide grants to eligible entities—

11 “(1) to assist with loss of revenue due to the
12 economic impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019
13 (COVID–19); and

14 “(2) to promote economic recovery in commu-
15 nities affected by a decline in tourism and events
16 due to COVID–19.

17 “(b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An entity eligible to re-
18 ceive a grant under this section is an entity that performs
19 tourism promotion responsibilities, hosts, organizes, owns,
20 operates, or staffs an event venue, a convention, or a trade
21 show, or provides services as a concessionaire to events
22 and tourism locations, including—

23 “(1) a State tourism board or department;

24 “(2) a political subdivision or instrumentality of
25 a State or local government;

1 “(3) a unit of local government, including a
2 county government;

3 “(4) a Tribal government;

4 “(5) a multijurisdictional or regional group;

5 “(6) a nonprofit organization described in sec-
6 tion 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
7 and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of
8 that Code;

9 “(7) a quasi-governmental organization; and

10 “(8) a private business.

11 “(c) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
12 under this section, an eligible entity shall submit to the
13 Secretary an application at such time, in such manner,
14 and containing such information as the Secretary may re-
15 quire.

16 “(d) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select eligible
17 entities to receive grants under this section based on fac-
18 tors to be determined by the Secretary, using the best
19 available data, including economic impact information pro-
20 vided by applicants, such as information on job losses
21 faced by the eligible entity or within the industry of the
22 eligible entity, to address the economic recovery needs in
23 areas impacted by the decline in travel, tourism, and
24 events activities, and the associated revenues, due to
25 COVID–19.

1 “(e) USE OF FUNDS.—

2 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity may use
3 the funds from a grant under this section—

4 “(A) to pay costs associated with tourism
5 marketing and promotion activities necessary to
6 assist with economic recovery from lost revenue
7 due to COVID–19, including to purchase media
8 advertisements on print, broadcast, or digital
9 media for the purpose of marketing, public
10 awareness, or information campaigns relating to
11 local tourism;

12 “(B) to pay costs to promote economic re-
13 covery in communities impacted by a decline in
14 travel, tourism, and events revenue as a result
15 of COVID–19, including through the provision
16 of information on the safety and security of
17 sites for traveler or attendee awareness;

18 “(C) to pay cleaning and sanitary costs, in-
19 cluding physical modifications, associated with
20 precautions to provide for safe worker, traveler,
21 or event environments; and

22 “(D) to pay the costs of salaries and ex-
23 penses associated with the operations of the eli-
24 gible entity with respect to activities described
25 in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C).

1 “(2) PROHIBITION.—Funds from a grant under
2 this section may not be used for activities related to
3 or for purposes of lobbying any governmental entity.

4 “(f) DISTRIBUTION.—Of the amounts made available
5 to carry out this section—

6 “(1) \$2,000,000,000 shall be for expedited
7 grants to eligible entities to offset revenue losses due
8 to the economic impact of COVID–19; and

9 “(2) any remaining amounts shall be for grants
10 for activities described in subparagraphs (A)
11 through (D) of subsection (e)(1).

12 “(g) MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF GRANT.—An eligible en-
13 tity may not receive a grant under this section in an
14 amount that is—

15 “(1) in the case of a grant under subsection
16 (f)(1), more than 80 percent of the loss in revenue
17 experienced by the eligible entity during the period
18 beginning March 1, 2020, and ending on the date of
19 submission of the application, as compared to the
20 same period in 2019; and

21 “(2) in the case of a grant under subsection
22 (f)(2), more than 80 percent of the revenue of the
23 eligible entity during calendar year 2019.

24 “(h) LIMITATION.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not more than 15 percent
2 of the amounts made available to carry out this sec-
3 tion may be used to provide grants to eligible enti-
4 ties that are private businesses.

5 “(2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-
6 ority for the amounts under paragraph (1) to private
7 businesses that are small business concerns (within
8 the meaning of section 3 of the Small Business Act
9 (15 U.S.C. 632)).

10 “(i) NO CEDS REQUIRED.—To receive a grant under
11 this section, an eligible entity shall not be required to have
12 a comprehensive economic development strategy.

13 “(j) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive, or specify
14 alternative requirements for, any provision of any statute
15 or regulation that the Secretary administers in connection
16 with a grant under this section if the Secretary determines
17 that any such waivers or alternative requirements are nec-
18 essary to expedite or facilitate the use of the amounts
19 made available under this section.

20 “(k) FEDERAL SHARE.—Notwithstanding section
21 204, the Federal share of the cost of an activity carried
22 out with a grant under this section shall be 100 percent.

23 “(l) ADMINISTRATION.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not more than 2 percent of
25 the amounts made available to carry out this section

1 may be used for the administrative costs of carrying
2 out this section.

3 “(2) STAFFING.—

4 “(A) TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT.—The
5 Secretary may appoint and fix the compensa-
6 tion of such temporary personnel as may be
7 necessary to carry out this section, without re-
8 gard to the provisions of title 5, United States
9 Code, governing appointments in competitive
10 service.

11 “(B) PERMANENT APPOINTMENT.—

12 “(i) IN GENERAL.—In the case of an
13 individual appointed as temporary per-
14 sonnel under subparagraph (A) who has
15 served continuously for not less than 2
16 years, the Secretary may appoint that indi-
17 vidual to a position in the Economic Devel-
18 opment Administration in the same man-
19 ner that competitive service employees with
20 competitive status are considered for trans-
21 fer, reassignment, or promotion to such po-
22 sitions.

23 “(ii) TREATMENT.—An individual ap-
24 pointed to a position under clause (i) shall
25 become a career-conditional employee, un-

1 less the employee has already completed
2 the service requirements for career tenure.

3 “(3) INVESTIGATIONS AND AUDITS.—The Sec-
4 retary shall use \$3,000,000 of the amounts made
5 available to carry out this section to carry out inves-
6 tigations and audits related to the provision of
7 grants under this section.

8 “(m) FUNDING.—

9 “(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
10 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
11 retary to carry out this section \$10,000,000,000, to
12 remain available until September 30, 2022.

13 “(2) ADDITIONAL FUNDING.—Notwithstanding
14 any other provision of law, the Secretary may use
15 any amounts made available to the Secretary under
16 the heading ‘ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
17 PROGRAMS (INCLUDING TRANSFERS OF FUNDS)’
18 under the heading ‘ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AD-
19 MINISTRATION’ under the heading ‘DEPARTMENT
20 OF COMMERCE’ in title II of division B of the
21 CARES Act (Public Law 116–136) that are unobli-
22 gated as of the date of enactment of the Sustaining
23 Tourism Enterprises During the COVID–19 Pan-
24 demic Act to provide grants under this section.”.