

# READ Act Reauthorization Act of 2023 (H.R.681)

## The Power of Education

New pencils, a fresh notebook, and an eager child waiting to learn – the first day of school is full of excitement and potential. The power of education is clear: brighter futures, healthier communities, and increased economic growth for individuals and countries. U.S. partnerships with low-income countries have helped build stronger education systems around the world. Efforts to abolish school fees, build infrastructure, and train teachers, paired with commitments from donors, have seen incredible results.

Despite those achievements, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted students around the world. School closures disrupted the education of more than [616 million students](#). Additional crises in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, and more have only increased those education gaps, with girls, low-income children, and children with disabilities facing the greatest barriers to education.

In many countries, particularly in Africa, as many as 86% of kids experience [learning poverty](#). Learning poverty is when children do not get the opportunity to learn to read simple texts by age 10. The longer vulnerable children are out of school, the less likely they are to return, and the World Bank estimates that this generation of students will lose [\\$17 trillion in lifetime earnings](#). And quality primary education isn't the only challenge. Around 200 million youth ages 12-17 are currently [out of secondary school](#), and 80 percent of children in low-income countries lack access to preschool.

## READ Act Reauthorization: Impact and Accountability

Introduced by Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Grace Meng (D-NY), the READ Act Reauthorization Act of 2023 is a reauthorization of the original 2017 READ Act. It would reauthorize the Act for an additional five years, continuing current U.S. efforts to ensure equal access to quality education for children throughout the world. The matching bill led by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) has already passed the Senate with bipartisan support.

The READ Act Reauthorization ensures that the U.S. government updates their strategy to improve foundational literacy and numeracy in basic education. It also requires rigorous monitoring and evaluation efforts and a [yearly report to Congress](#) and the public.

Specifically, the legislation calls for:

- Developing a comprehensive integrated U.S. strategy that improves educational opportunities and addresses key barriers to children's school attendance, retention and completion, especially for girls;
- Ensuring education services for children affected by conflict and other emergencies;

- Coordinating U.S. government efforts to efficiently and effectively manage resources;
- Working with countries to strengthen systems in order to build long-term sustainability;
- Engaging with key partners including other donors, civil society and multilateral initiatives, including the Global Partnership for Education, to leverage U.S. contributions to achieve a greater overall impact;
- Requiring specific indicators and objectives with which to measure progress; and
- Improving the transparency and accountability of our basic education programs, ensuring taxpayer dollars have the most impact for children worldwide.

The U.S. government has long been a leader in global education, and the READ Act increased the effectiveness and impact of this work. Reauthorizing for another five years will maintain a well-resourced global education strategy and ensure the U.S. effectively contributes to realizing quality education around the world.

## Did You Know?

In 2020, 5 million children under age 5 died, but **children of mothers with 12 years of education are 30 percent less likely to die before age 5.** (UNICEF, University of Washington School of Medicine)

**For each year of school completed, future wages increase an average of 10 percent.**

This impact is even greater for girls. On average, for a girl in a poor country, each additional year of education will lead to up to 20 percent higher wages. (World Bank)

**No country has achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without at least 40 percent of adults being able to read and write.** (UNESCO, Oxfam)

**Girls with no education are three times as likely to marry before age 18** as those with secondary education. (ICRW)

## To support this bipartisan legislation:

To sign on as a cosponsor, please contact [John.McDonough@mail.house.gov](mailto:John.McDonough@mail.house.gov) (Smith) or [max.harris@mail.house.gov](mailto:max.harris@mail.house.gov) (Meng).