

## Adams, Sewell, Turner, Fitzpatrick Introduce Legislation to Support Minority Students in STEM Fields



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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Democratic Congresswomen Alma Adams (NC-12) and Terri Sewell (AL-07) and Republican Representatives Mike Turner (OH-10) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01) announced the introduction of H.R. 7313, the bipartisan *Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act*. The legislation is designed to help diverse communities succeed in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

A similar bill, the *Supporting Minority STEM Student to Career Act*, was introduced in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

[Text of the bill is available here.](#)

“Minority students in STEM fields deserve equitable investments in their futures,” said **Congresswoman Adams, founder and co-chair of the HBCU Caucus**. “That is why, during our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual HBCU STEAM Days of Action, I introduced the *Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act* to give Minority Serving Institutions the resources they need to become leaders in STEM fields. This legislation will provide critical resources to level the playing field for diverse STEM students and the institutions they attend, and it

will help train and retain minority students in STEM fields. I'm proud to be joined by our HBCU Caucus Vice Chairs, Representatives Sewell and Turner, and Representative Fitzpatrick in leading this bipartisan effort in the House."

"A strong and diverse STEM workforce is integral to ensuring American competitiveness on a global scale," **said Rep. Fitzpatrick.** "I am pleased to support the bipartisan Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act, which will provide Minority Serving Institutions and their students with the necessary tools and resources they need to succeed in the STEM field."

"HBCUs play a critical role in our community by fostering future leaders through higher education. This legislation will broaden career opportunities for students by funding STEM programs at HBCUs. As the Vice-Chair of the HBCU Caucus I will continue to support HBCUs and encourage my fellow colleagues to support this important legislation," **said Rep. Turner, vice chair of the HBCU Caucus.**

"For America to compete and win on the world stage, we must continue to build a strong, diverse, and well-prepared workforce that excels in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math," **said Rep. Sewell, vice chair of the HBCU Caucus.**

"Unfortunately, many minority students in STEM are being left behind due to lack of adequate support and resources. The Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act tackles this issue by providing resources to help retain, prepare, and promote the success of underrepresented and diverse students in STEM. I'm proud to be an original cosponsor of this bill which will help minority students across this nation reach their full potential and ensure that our workforce is prepared to tackle the challenges of our time."

**Rep. Jamaal Bowman (NY-16)** is also an original cosponsor of the *Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act*.

"Our collective prosperity depends on extending opportunities for all students – from every background – to study in the critical science, technology, engineering, and math fields. This bill would give a boost to the Minority Science and Engineering Achievement program at a time when we need all the talent we can muster to address the global challenges we face as a nation. Minority Serving Institutions can help grow the STEM fields in new and innovative ways if we make the choice to invest in them through policies like this bill," **said James Brown, Executive Director, STEM Education Coalition.**

"It is our imperative to create accessible pathways into tech that are diverse, equitable and inclusive," **said Brenda Darden Wilkerson, President and CEO of AnitaB.org, a non-profit committed to advancing opportunities for women and non-**

**binary technologists.** “The Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act is a model because it acknowledges the gaps that exist in the STEM ecosystem while providing actual resources to solve the problems. We need more action and less rhetoric to ensure there is equitable access to careers in tech and beyond.”

## **Background**

A well-prepared workforce — inclusive of America’s diverse communities — is necessary for cultivating our U.S. STEM capacity. As we continue to prioritize educating and training more individuals in STEM, underrepresented minority students are disproportionately left behind in their STEM studies. According to the EAB, researchers find over a third of Black and Latino students switch out of their STEM majors before earning their degree, in part due to a lack of access to the academic resources that traditionally help support students to completion.

Specifically, the ***Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act*** would update the Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program (MSEIP) to support institutions that predominantly serve minority students in their capacity to provide direct scholarships and comprehensive wraparound services for their STEM student success. These services include guidance counseling and academic advising; work-study and work-based learning opportunities; faculty and peer mentorship; summer bridge programs; undergraduate research opportunities; and individualized academic support and tutoring.

It would additionally update the definition of STEM in the Higher Education Act to include computer science and direct the Secretary of Education to report to Congress a strategy report on expanding access and opportunities for postsecondary students who are underrepresented in science and engineering. As the United States continues to support the cultivation of our STEM talent, the Supporting Diverse STEM Students Act will help provide the resources that help retain, prepare, and promote the success of underrepresented and diverse students in STEM.

**Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.** represents North Carolina’s 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County). In 2015, she founded the Congressional Bipartisan Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Caucus in Congress. She is a double graduate of North Carolina A&T, the largest HBCU by enrollment in the United States, and was a professor at Bennett College for four decades.

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