

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To establish Ocean Innovation Clusters to strengthen the coastal communities and ocean economy of the United States through technological research and development, job training, and cross-sector partnerships, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. KING, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mrs. MURRAY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish Ocean Innovation Clusters to strengthen the coastal communities and ocean economy of the United States through technological research and development, job training, and cross-sector partnerships, 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 “Ocean Regional Oppor-
5 tunity and Innovation Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) BLUE ECONOMY.—The term “Blue Econ-
4 omy” means the value and impact of sustainable in-
5 dustries related to the Great Lakes, oceans, bays, es-
6 tuaries, and coasts on the economy of the United
7 States, including living resources, marine construc-
8 tion, marine transportation, offshore energy develop-
9 ment and siting including for renewable energy, off-
10 shore mineral production, ship and boat building,
11 tourism, recreation, subsistence, commercial, rec-
12 reational, and charter fishing, seafood processing,
13 and other fishery-related businesses, kelp and shell-
14 fish aquaculture, coastal resilience, and other indus-
15 tries the Secretary of Commerce considers appro-
16 priate.

17 (2) DIRECTOR OF SEA GRANT.—The term “Di-
18 rector of Sea Grant” means the Director of the Na-
19 tional Sea Grant College Program appointed under
20 section 204(d)(1) of the National Sea Grant College
21 Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(1)).

22 (3) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
23 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
24 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
25 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

1 (4) NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.—The
2 term “Native Hawaiian organization” has the mean-
3 ing given the term in section 6207 of the Native Ha-
4 waiian Education Act (20 U.S.C. 7517).

5 (5) OCEAN INNOVATION CENTER FOR CROSS-
6 SECTOR COLLABORATION.—The term “Ocean Inno-
7 vation Center for Cross-Sector Collaboration” means
8 a physical space for collaboration developed and
9 managed in accordance with section 3(i).

10 (6) OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTER.—The term
11 “Ocean Innovation Cluster” means an eligible entity
12 designated by the Secretary of Commerce under sec-
13 tion 3.

14 **SEC. 3. OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

15 (a) DESIGNATION.—Not later than 1 year after the
16 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Com-
17 merce, in consultation with the Director of Sea Grant, the
18 Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmos-
19 phere, and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Eco-
20 nomic Development, shall designate not fewer than 7 eligi-
21 ble entities as Ocean Innovation Clusters.

22 (b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of this sec-
23 tion, an eligible entity is an entity—

24 (1) that is composed, in a concentrated geo-
25 graphic region, of 1 or more—

1 (A) business organizations;

2 (B) academic institutions, including
3 minority- and Tribal-serving institutions;

4 (C) not-for-profit organizations;

5 (D) Federal, State, or local governmental
6 entities, agencies, or instrumentalities;

7 (E) Indian Tribes; or

8 (F) Native Hawaiian organizations;

9 (2) that is led by a not-for-profit organization;

10 and

11 (3) that works to deliver services in the con-
12 centrated geographic region where the entity is lo-
13 cated, enhance collaboration, promote innovation,
14 and contribute to the equitable and sustainable
15 growth of the Blue Economy across all sectors.

16 (c) PRIORITY.—In designating entities as Ocean In-
17 novation Clusters under subsection (a), the Secretary of
18 Commerce shall prioritize entities with a history of sup-
19 porting cross-sector growth and development of the Blue
20 Economy.

21 (d) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—The Secretary of
22 Commerce shall designate not fewer than 1 Ocean Innova-
23 tion Cluster under subsection (a) in—

1 (1) each of the regions covered by the 5 re-
2 gional offices of the National Marine Fisheries Serv-
3 ice;

4 (2) the Great Lakes region; and

5 (3) the Gulf of Mexico region.

6 (e) CONSIDERATIONS.—In designating an eligible en-
7 tity as an Ocean Innovation Cluster under subsection (a),
8 the Secretary of Commerce shall consider the following:

9 (1) The economic development potential of the
10 coastal community or region in which the entity is
11 located.

12 (2) The ability of the entity to incorporate and
13 bring growth and opportunity to broad geographic
14 areas, including urban, rural, and underserved areas.

15 (3) Whether the entity serves a diverse,
16 multigenerational, ocean-dependent population con-
17 sisting of groups with different socioeconomic and
18 educational attainment levels, industries, and Indian
19 Tribes.

20 (4) The ability of the entity to cultivate and le-
21 verage partnerships with private industry, academia,
22 nongovernmental organizations, Federal, State, and
23 local governments, and Indian Tribes to collaborate
24 on shared outcomes.

1 (5) The relative potential for the designation of
2 the entity as an Ocean Innovation Cluster to reverse
3 a decline, or accelerate growth, in ocean sector jobs.

4 (6) The ability of the entity to carry out
5 projects that support economic and climate resilience
6 through economic diversification and long-term re-
7 covery from natural disasters.

8 (7) The extent, rural and underserved nature,
9 and economic underutilization of the coastline and
10 ocean area that projects carried out by the entity
11 could affect.

12 (f) PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT.—

13 (1) PARTNERSHIP LIAISONS.—

14 (A) DESIGNATION.—The Director of Sea
15 Grant, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
16 Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assistant Sec-
17 retary of Commerce for Economic Development
18 shall each designate 1 partnership manager
19 from within their respective agencies to serve as
20 a partnership liaison between each Ocean Inno-
21 vation Cluster and Sea Grant, the National
22 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and
23 the Economic Development Administration, re-
24 spectively.

1 (B) FUNCTION.—Each partnership liaison
2 designated under subparagraph (A) shall ensure
3 that Ocean Innovation Clusters—

4 (i) have direct communication with
5 the agency of the liaison; and

6 (ii) allow for collaboration and align-
7 ment with Federal objectives in each re-
8 gion regarding the Blue Economy.

9 (2) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—

10 (A) SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND PART-
11 NERSHIP LIAISONS.—The Secretary of Com-
12 merce shall coordinate with the Director of Sea
13 Grant, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
14 Oceans and Atmosphere, the Assistant Sec-
15 retary of Commerce for Economic Development,
16 the Department of Energy, the Maritime Ad-
17 ministration of the Department of Transpor-
18 tation, the Environmental Protection Agency,
19 the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management of
20 the Department of the Interior, the Department
21 of Agriculture, the Coast Guard, and such other
22 Federal agencies, including bureaus of the De-
23 partment of Commerce, as the Secretary of
24 Commerce considers appropriate to increase
25 technical knowledge exchange and opportunities

1 for cross-sector collaboration with those agen-
2 cies.

3 (B) SECRETARY OF ENERGY.—With re-
4 spect to matters relating to the nexus of the
5 Blue Economy and the responsibilities and ex-
6 pertise of the Department of Energy, the Sec-
7 retary of Energy—

8 (i) shall provide advice and rec-
9 ommendations to the Secretary of Com-
10 merce in order to increase technical knowl-
11 edge exchange and opportunities for cross-
12 sector collaboration; and

13 (ii) may provide such advice and rec-
14 ommendations without any formal request
15 from the Department of Commerce.

16 (g) DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC IMPACT METRICS
17 OF OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.—The Administrator
18 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
19 the Director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the
20 Department of Commerce, and the heads of other relevant
21 Federal agencies shall use and refine the Marine Economy
22 Satellite Account to measure the value to and impact of
23 Ocean Innovation Clusters on the Blue Economy.

24 (h) AREAS OF FOCUS.—The Director of Sea Grant,
25 the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and At-

1 mosphere, and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
2 Economic Development shall coordinate with each Ocean
3 Innovation Cluster in the following areas of focus:

4 (1) Increasing pathways for new entrants into
5 the Blue Economy for individuals and entities.

6 (2) Intellectual property management.

7 (3) Enhancing the sustainability of seafood sup-
8 ply chains, including with respect to food, transpor-
9 tation, processing, health and beauty products, ani-
10 mal feed, medical biotechnology, bioplastics, biofuels,
11 and other value-added products, to strive for full use
12 of harvested natural resources.

13 (4) Providing significant and sustainable eco-
14 nomic opportunity through advanced research, cross-
15 sector science, and technology development.

16 (5) Contributing new knowledge, processes,
17 technology, and support for stakeholders in the Blue
18 Economy, especially to advance sustainability in spe-
19 cific sectors.

20 (6) Working with Federal, State, local, and
21 Tribal agencies to clearly communicate laws, regula-
22 tions, and agency practices affecting industry needs,
23 planning, or growth opportunities.

24 (7) Creating investable opportunities through
25 the development of economies of scale to enhance

1 growth opportunities, job creation, sustainability,
2 and expansion for small businesses within the Blue
3 Economy.

4 (8) Workforce development and training, busi-
5 ness planning, identifying existing and needed tech-
6 nology and economic infrastructure, and coordinated
7 research and development among small businesses,
8 government, and industry.

9 (9) Research, development, and implementation
10 of ocean energy, bioprospecting, and other innovative
11 and sustainable ocean resource development endeav-
12 ors.

13 (i) OCEAN INNOVATION CENTERS FOR CROSS-SEC-
14 TOR COLLABORATION.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—In order to foster collabora-
16 tion and innovation and strengthen regional ocean
17 sector economies while creating employment oppor-
18 tunities, the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant
19 Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere,
20 and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Eco-
21 nomic Development shall collaborate with cross-sec-
22 tor partners to jointly develop or designate at least
23 1 physical space for collaboration as an Ocean Inno-
24 vation Center for Cross-Sector Collaboration within

1 each of the 7 regions with an Ocean Innovation
2 Cluster.

3 (2) MANAGEMENT.—An Ocean Innovation Clus-
4 ter or a group of Ocean Innovation Clusters shall
5 manage the Ocean Innovation Center for Cross-Sec-
6 tor Collaboration of the region in which the Cluster
7 or Clusters is located.

8 (3) FUNCTIONS.—Each Ocean Innovation Cen-
9 ter for Cross-Sector Collaboration shall—

10 (A) serve as a hub for partners within
11 Ocean Innovation Clusters to work toward the
12 areas of focus in described in subsection (h);

13 (B) support a community of entrepreneurs
14 focused on strengthening vibrant marine-de-
15 pendent communities and the Blue Economy;

16 (C) create workspaces and laboratories de-
17 signed to promote collaboration, including
18 through shared meeting rooms, access to tech-
19 nology, common spaces, and offices;

20 (D) strengthen relationships among indus-
21 try sectors through shared scientific, staffing,
22 and business resources;

23 (E) develop the critical networks with
24 cross-sector partners that entrepreneurs need to
25 grow effectively; and

1 (F) develop the next generation of Blue
2 Economy workers by providing internships, ap-
3 prenticeships, or training, as appropriate, in-
4 cluding for underrepresented and Tribal com-
5 munities and local trade schools.

6 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

7 The Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of
8 1980 (15 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.) is amended by adding at
9 the end the following:

10 **“SEC. 31. GRANTS FOR OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

11 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation
12 with the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant Secretary
13 of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assist-
14 ant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development,
15 may award grants, on a competitive basis, to Ocean Inno-
16 vation Clusters for the purposes described in subsection
17 (b).

18 “(b) PURPOSES.—The Secretary may award grants
19 under subsection (a) for—

20 “(1) the operation and administration of one or
21 more Ocean Innovation Clusters under the Ocean
22 Regional Opportunity and Innovation Act of 2023,
23 with the goal that Ocean Innovation Clusters will be-
24 come membership-based, self-sustaining entities; and

1 “(2) one-time capital investments made by one
2 or more Ocean Innovation Clusters necessary—

3 “(A) to establish one or more Ocean Inno-
4 vation Centers for Cross-Sector Collaboration;
5 and

6 “(B) to foster cross-sector collaboration
7 within Ocean Innovation Cluster regions.

8 “(c) INPUT.—In awarding a grant under subsection
9 (a), the Secretary shall provide an opportunity for input
10 from the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant Secretary
11 of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assist-
12 ant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

13 “(d) TERM OF GRANTS.—

14 “(1) OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term of a grant
16 awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose de-
17 scribed in subsection (b)(1) shall be 2 years.

18 “(B) RENEWAL.—The Secretary may
19 renew a grant described in subparagraph (A)
20 for additional periods of such duration as the
21 Secretary determines to be appropriate and nec-
22 essary for the Ocean Innovation Cluster that
23 received the grant to provide regional economic
24 benefits.

1 “(2) CAPITAL INVESTMENT.—The term of a
2 grant awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose
3 described in subsection (b)(2) shall be for a period
4 determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

5 “(e) GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE.—Any grant
6 awarded under subsection (a) to support the construction
7 of facilities, upgrades to existing facilities, or site
8 connectivity infrastructure shall be awarded pursuant to
9 section 201 of the Public Works and Economic Develop-
10 ment Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3141) and subject to the
11 provisions of such Act, except that subsection (b) of such
12 section and sections 204 and 301 of such Act (42 U.S.C.
13 3144, 3161) shall not apply.

14 “(f) LIMITATIONS ON GRANT AMOUNTS.—

15 “(1) OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION.—A
16 grant awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose
17 described in subsection (b)(1) may not exceed
18 \$10,000,000.

19 “(2) CAPITAL INVESTMENT.—A grant awarded
20 under subsection (a) for a purpose described in sub-
21 section (b)(2) may not exceed \$10,000,000.

22 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
23 is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to award
24 grants under subsection (a) \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal
25 years 2024 through 2029.

1 “(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 “(1) DIRECTOR OF SEA GRANT.—The term ‘Di-
3 rector of Sea Grant’ means the Director of the Na-
4 tional Sea Grant College Program appointed under
5 section 204(d)(1) of the National Sea Grant College
6 Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(1)).

7 “(2) OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTER; OCEAN IN-
8 NOVATION CENTER FOR CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORA-
9 TION.—The terms ‘Ocean Innovation Cluster’ and
10 ‘Ocean Innovation Center for Cross-Sector Collabo-
11 ration’ have the meanings given those terms in sec-
12 tion 2 of the Ocean Regional Opportunity and Inno-
13 vation Act of 2023.”.