

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7639

To establish a National Advisory Council on Unpaid School Meal Debt in
Child Nutrition Programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2024

Ms. OMAR (for herself, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. BOWMAN, Mr. CARSON, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. NORTON, Ms. PORTER, Ms. SALINAS, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To establish a National Advisory Council on Unpaid School
Meal Debt in Child Nutrition Programs, 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 “National Advisory
5 Council on Unpaid School Meal Debt Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON UNPAID SCHOOL**
2 **MEAL DEBT IN CHILD NUTRITION PRO-**
3 **GRAMS.**

4 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established a Na-
5 tional Advisory Council on Unpaid School Meal Debt in
6 Child Nutrition Programs (in this section referred to as
7 the “Council”).

8 (b) **DUTIES.**—The Council shall provide rec-
9 ommendations, in accordance with subsection (g), to the
10 Administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service with re-
11 spect to addressing unpaid school meal fees by ensuring
12 that—

13 (1) students are not stigmatized; and

14 (2) school food authorities can maintain fiscal
15 solvency in order to ensure the long-term viability of
16 school meal programs.

17 (c) **MEMBERSHIP.**—

18 (1) **NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.**—The Council
19 shall be composed of 14 members appointed by the
20 Secretary as follows:

21 (A) 2 members shall be school nutrition
22 State agency directors who are employed in dif-
23 ferent States;

24 (B) 2 members shall be school food service
25 directors of a school meal program in an urban
26 area who are employed in different States;

1 (C) 2 members shall be school food service
2 directors of a school meal program in a rural
3 area who are employed in different States;

4 (D) 2 members shall be officials of the
5 Food and Nutrition Service office of the De-
6 partment of Agriculture;

7 (E) 2 members shall be parents or guard-
8 ians (who are not related to one another or to
9 the same child) of children who are eligible for
10 free and reduced price school meals;

11 (F) 2 members shall represent organiza-
12 tions with expertise in the school meal pro-
13 grams; and

14 (G) 2 members shall be food service profes-
15 sionals who—

16 (i) work in school cafeterias; and

17 (ii) maintain daily contact with stu-
18 dents, including by preparing or serving
19 meals or working at registers.

20 (2) TERMS.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each member shall be
22 appointed for the life of the Council.

23 (B) VACANCIES.—Any member appointed
24 to fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration

1 of the life of the Council shall be appointed for
2 the remainder of the life of the Council.

3 (d) COMPENSATION.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Members shall serve without
5 pay.

6 (2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.— Each member shall
7 receive travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of
8 subsistence, in accordance with applicable provisions
9 under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United
10 States Code.

11 (3) PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.—In the case of a
12 member who is a parent or guardian appointed
13 under subsection (c)(1)(E), such member, in addi-
14 tion to reimbursement under paragraph (2), shall, at
15 the discretion of the Secretary, be compensated in
16 advance for other personal expenses related to par-
17 ticipation on the Council, including child care ex-
18 penses and lost wages during scheduled Council
19 meetings.

20 (4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

21 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
22 this subsection \$1,500,000, to remain available
23 through the date described in subsection (h).

24 (e) CHAIRPERSON; VICE CHAIRPERSON.—

1 (1) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for election to
2 Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the Council, an
3 individual must be a member of the Council de-
4 scribed in subsection (c)(1).

5 (2) ELECTION.—The Chairperson and Vice
6 Chairperson of the Council shall be elected by such
7 members.

8 (f) MEETINGS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall meet not
10 fewer than 2 times per year at the call of the Chair-
11 person.

12 (2) QUORUM.—5 members of the Council shall
13 constitute a quorum.

14 (g) REPORT.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after
16 the establishment of the Council under subsection
17 (a), the Council shall submit to the Administrator of
18 the Food and Nutrition Service a report containing
19 the recommendations described in subsection (b).

20 (2) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 1 year after
21 the submission of the report under paragraph (1),
22 the Secretary, acting through the Administrator of
23 the Food and Nutrition Service, shall use the rec-
24 ommendations contained in such report to issue

1 guidance with respect to addressing unpaid school
2 meal fees.

3 (h) TERMINATION.—The Council shall terminate on
4 the date that is 1 day after the submission of the report
5 required under subsection (g).

6 (i) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall
7 provide the Council with such technical and other assist-
8 ance, including secretarial and clerical assistance, as may
9 be required to carry out its functions.

10 (j) UNPAID SCHOOL MEAL FEES DEFINED.—In this
11 section, the term “unpaid school meal fees” means out-
12 standing fees owed by a household to a local educational
13 agency for lunches under this Act or breakfasts under sec-
14 tion 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C.
15 1773).

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