

  
(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R.

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to improve direct certification, and for other purposes.

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. HAYES introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

# A BILL

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to improve direct certification, 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 “School Modernization  
5 and Efficient Access to Lunches for Students Act of  
6 2021” or the “School MEALS Act of 2021”.

7 **SEC. 2. EXPANDING DIRECT CERTIFICATION.**

8 Section 9(b)(4)(F)(iii)(II)(bb) of the Richard B. Rus-  
9 sell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.

1 1758(b)(4)(F)(iii)(II)(bb)) is amended by inserting “in  
2 not more than 3 school years” after “measures”.

3 **SEC. 3. DIRECT CERTIFICATION IMPROVEMENT GRANTS**  
4 **AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**

5 Section 9(b) of the Richard B. Russell National  
6 School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)) is amended by add-  
7 ing at the end the following:

8 “(16) DIRECT CERTIFICATION IMPROVEMENT  
9 GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

10 “(A) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

11 “(i) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘el-  
12 igible entity’ means—

13 “(I) a State agency; and

14 “(II) a Tribal organization.

15 “(ii) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term ‘In-  
16 dian Tribe’ has the meaning given the  
17 term ‘Indian tribe’ in section 4 of the In-  
18 dian Self-Determination and Education  
19 Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

20 “(iii) RATE OF DIRECT CERTIFI-  
21 CATION.—The term ‘rate of direct certifi-  
22 cation’ means the percentage of children  
23 eligible for direct certification under para-  
24 graphs (4) and (5) for a school year that

1                   were directly certified under those para-  
2                   graphs for that school year.

3                   “(iv) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The  
4                   term ‘Tribal organization’ has the meaning  
5                   given the term ‘tribal organization’ in sec-  
6                   tion 4 of the Indian Self-Determination  
7                   and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C.  
8                   5304).

9                   “(B) GRANTS.—

10                  “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary  
11                  shall provide grants to eligible entities that  
12                  administer the school lunch program under  
13                  this Act to improve the rate of direct cer-  
14                  tification in the State in which the eligible  
15                  entity is located.

16                  “(ii) PRIORITY.—In providing grants  
17                  under clause (i), the Secretary shall give  
18                  priority to States and Tribal organizations  
19                  with the lowest rates of direct certification.

20                  “(iii) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible en-  
21                  tity that receives a grant under clause (i)  
22                  shall use the grant funds to pay costs re-  
23                  lating to improving the rate of direct cer-  
24                  tification in the State or Indian Tribe, as  
25                  applicable, including the cost of—

1 “(I) improving technology relat-  
2 ing to direct certification;

3 “(II) providing technical assist-  
4 ance to local educational agencies;

5 “(III) newly implementing or re-  
6 vising a direct certification system or  
7 process in the State (including at local  
8 educational agencies in the State) or  
9 Indian Tribe, including the cost of  
10 equipment; and

11 “(IV) coordinating with multiple  
12 public benefits programs to increase  
13 the rate of direct certification, includ-  
14 ing by conducting feasibility studies  
15 and demonstration projects under sec-  
16 tion 18(c).

17 “(C) FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM ON  
18 INDIAN RESERVATIONS.—

19 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary  
20 shall provide grants to States and Tribal  
21 organizations administering the food dis-  
22 tribution program on Indian reservations  
23 under section 4(b) of the Food and Nutri-  
24 tion Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2013(b))—

1                   “(I) in the case of a Tribal orga-  
2                   nization, if applicable, to establish a  
3                   rate of direct certification of children  
4                   that are members of households re-  
5                   ceiving assistance under that pro-  
6                   gram; or

7                   “(II) to improve the rate of di-  
8                   rect certification of children that are  
9                   members of households receiving as-  
10                  sistance under that program.

11                  “(ii) USE OF FUNDS.—A State or  
12                  Tribal organization receiving a grant under  
13                  this subparagraph shall use the funds to  
14                  pay the costs described in subparagraph  
15                  (B)(iii).

16                  “(D) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Sec-  
17                  retary shall provide technical assistance to as-  
18                  sist the recipients of grants under subpara-  
19                  graphs (B) and (C), and other eligible entities,  
20                  as appropriate, in improving the rates of direct  
21                  certification.

22                  “(E) FUNDING.—

23                  “(i) IN GENERAL.—On October 1,  
24                  2021, out of any funds in the Treasury not  
25                  otherwise appropriated, the Secretary of

1 the Treasury shall transfer to the Sec-  
2 retary to carry out this paragraph  
3 \$28,000,000, to remain available until ex-  
4 pended.

5 “(ii) FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM  
6 ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS.—Of the funds  
7 transferred to the Secretary under clause  
8 (i), the Secretary shall use not less than  
9 \$2,000,000 to carry out subparagraph (C).

10 “(iii) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—Of  
11 the funds transferred to the Secretary  
12 under clause (i), the Secretary shall use  
13 not more than \$3,000,000 to carry out  
14 subparagraph (D).

15 “(iv) RECEIPT AND ACCEPTANCE.—  
16 The Secretary shall be entitled to receive,  
17 shall accept, and shall use to carry out this  
18 paragraph the funds transferred under  
19 clause (i), without further appropriation.”.

20 **SEC. 4. ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY OPTION.**

21 Section 11(a)(1)(F) of the Richard B. Russell Na-  
22 tional School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)) is  
23 amended—

24 (1) in clause (iv)—

25 (A) in subclause (I)(bb)—

1 (i) by striking “as of April 1 of the  
2 prior school year” and inserting “during  
3 the period beginning on April 1 of the  
4 prior school year and ending on the last  
5 day of that school year”; and

6 (ii) by striking “as of April 1 of the  
7 school year prior” and all that follows  
8 through “subparagraph” and inserting  
9 “during the period beginning on April 1 of  
10 the covered school year and ending on the  
11 last day of the covered school year”; and

12 (B) by adding at the end the following:

13 “(III) DEFINITION OF COVERED  
14 SCHOOL YEAR.—In this clause, the  
15 term ‘covered school year’ means the  
16 school year prior to the first school  
17 year that a school or local educational  
18 agency elected to receive special as-  
19 sistance payments under this subpara-  
20 graph.”; and

21 (2) in clause (x)—

22 (A) in subclause (I), by striking “for the  
23 next school year if, not later than June 30 of  
24 the current school year,” and inserting “if”;

1 (B) in subclause (II)(aa), by inserting “,  
2 based on counts conducted by schools of identi-  
3 fied students beginning on or after April 1 of  
4 that school year,” after “clause (viii)”;

5 (C) in subclause (IV)(aa), by inserting “,  
6 based on counts conducted by schools of identi-  
7 fied students beginning on or after April 1 of  
8 that school year,” after “clause (viii)”.

9 **SEC. 5. ENHANCING DIRECT CERTIFICATION.**

10 Section 9(b)(15)(B)(ii)(III) of the Richard B. Russell  
11 National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.  
12 1758(b)(15)(B)(ii)(III)) is amended by striking “10” and  
13 inserting “20”.

14 **SEC. 6. STATE PERFORMANCE ON ENROLLING CHILDREN**  
15 **RECEIVING PROGRAM BENEFITS FOR FREE**  
16 **SCHOOL MEALS.**

17 Section 4301(b) of the Food, Conservation, and En-  
18 ergy Act of 2008 (42 U.S.C. 1758a(b)) is amended—

19 (1) in paragraph (2), by striking “and” at the  
20 end;

21 (2) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at  
22 the end and inserting “; and”; and

23 (3) by adding at the end the following:

24 “(4) in the case of a State identified under  
25 clause (ii)(I) of section 9(b)(4)(F) of the Richard B.



1 Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.  
2 1758(b)(4)(F)), a description of—

3 “(A) the technical assistance provided to  
4 the State; and

5 “(B) the progress made by the State in  
6 implementing the measures and meeting the  
7 goals described in items (aa) through (cc) of  
8 clause (iii)(II) of that section.”.