

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8928

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a pilot program promoting scratch cooking in school meal programs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 20, 2026

Mrs. HAYES (for herself, Mr. FITZPATRICK, and Ms. BROWNLEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a pilot program promoting scratch cooking in school meal programs.

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 “Scratch Cooked Meals
5 for Students Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM FOR GRANTS PROMOTING**
2 **SCRATCH COOKING IN SCHOOL MEAL PRO-**
3 **GRAMS.**

4 Section 18 of the Richard B. Russell National School
5 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769) is amended by inserting be-
6 fore subsection (b) the following new subsection:

7 “(a) SCRATCH COOKING PILOT PROGRAM.—

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—

9 “(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than
10 180 days after the date of the enactment of this
11 subsection, the Secretary shall establish a pilot
12 program to award competitive grants to school
13 food authorities to promote scratch cooking.

14 “(B) SCRATCH COOKING DEFINED.—In
15 this subsection, the term ‘scratch cooking’
16 means the preparation of food using ingredients
17 that are unprocessed or minimally processed.

18 “(2) GRANT AMOUNTS AND DURATION.—A
19 grant awarded under this subsection shall be made
20 for a period of 2 school years.

21 “(3) ELIGIBLE USES.—A grant awarded under
22 this subsection shall be used by a school food au-
23 thority to promote scratch cooking, which may in-
24 clude—

25 “(A) promoting professional development
26 and training related to preparing, procuring,

1 advertising, serving, and creating menus of
2 meals made with scratch cooking;

3 “(B) purchasing cafeteria equipment or
4 making infrastructure modifications necessary
5 for scratch cooking;

6 “(C) employee compensation for additional
7 food preparation necessary for scratch cooking;

8 “(D) providing technical assistance, pupil
9 engagement, and education related to scratch
10 cooking, such as taste tests, recipe development,
11 and culinary education;

12 “(E) investing in software and technology
13 systems for procurement to support scratch
14 cooking; and

15 “(F) carrying out any additional activities
16 to promote scratch cooking that will help school
17 food authorities meet or exceed the nutrition
18 standards for the school lunch program author-
19 ized under this Act and the school breakfast
20 program established by section 4 of the Child
21 Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773).

22 “(4) PRIORITY.—In evaluating grant applica-
23 tions under this subsection, the Secretary shall give
24 the highest priority to school food authorities that—

1 “(A) serve the greatest proportion of stu-
2 dents eligible for free or reduced price lunch
3 under this Act;

4 “(B) are—

5 “(i) self-operated; or

6 “(ii) provide an assurance to the Sec-
7 retary that the school food authority will
8 be self-operated on or before the date that
9 is 1 year before the last day of the grant
10 period; and

11 “(C) either—

12 “(i) have employees who are rep-
13 resented by a collective bargaining agree-
14 ment or memorandum of understanding, if
15 such employees are permitted by law to be
16 so represented; or

17 “(ii) provide an assurance to the Sec-
18 retary that the school food authority will,
19 with respect to the employees of such
20 school food authority, negotiate a collective
21 bargaining agreement or memorandum of
22 understanding on or before the date that is
23 1 year before the last day of the grant pe-
24 riod.

25 “(5) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

1 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
2 enter into an agreement with one or more non-
3 profit organizations to establish and carry out
4 a technical assistance and resource center to
5 provide technical assistance with respect to car-
6 rying out subparagraphs (A) through (C) of
7 paragraph (3).

8 “(B) COLLABORATION REQUIREMENT.—As
9 soon as practicable after receiving a grant
10 under this subsection, a school food authority
11 shall collaborate with the technical assistance
12 and resource center established under subpara-
13 graph (A) to—

14 “(i) conduct a needs assessment to
15 evaluate equipment needs, equipment utili-
16 zation, procurement processes, and work-
17 force capabilities of the school food author-
18 ity; and

19 “(ii) based on such needs assessment,
20 establish a strategic plan to carry out the
21 grant under this subsection.

22 “(6) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after
23 the conclusion of the grant period described in para-
24 graph (2), each school food authority that receives
25 a grant under this subsection shall submit to the

1 Secretary a report that includes, with respect to
 2 such school food authority, the change at the end of
 3 the grant period, as compared with the school year
 4 immediately preceding the beginning of the grant pe-
 5 riod, in—

6 “(A) the percentage of whole ingredients,
 7 raw ingredients, or both, as a share of total ex-
 8 penditures used in school meals; and

9 “(B) the percentage of menu items pre-
 10 pared with scratch cooking.

11 “(7) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

12 “(A) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to
 13 be appropriated to carry out this subsection
 14 \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027
 15 through 2031.

16 “(B) RESERVATIONS.—Of the amounts
 17 made available under subparagraph (A), the
 18 Secretary shall reserve—

19 “(i) not more than 15 percent for pur-
 20 poses of carrying out paragraph (5), in-
 21 cluding administrative expenses; and

22 “(ii) not more than 5 percent for
 23 other administrative expenses of the Sec-
 24 retary.”.

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