

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3669

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a pilot program to award grants to school food authorities to provide 100 percent plant-based food and milk options, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 15, 2026

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. BOOKER, and Mr. PADILLA) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a pilot program to award grants to school food authorities to provide 100 percent plant-based food and milk options, 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 “Plant-Powered School
5 Meals Pilot Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PLANT-BASED FOODS IN SCHOOLS.**

2 Section 18 of the Richard B. Russell National School
3 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769) is amended by inserting after
4 subsection (c) the following:

5 “(d) PILOT PROGRAM FOR 100 PERCENT PLANT-
6 BASED FOOD OPTIONS.—

7 “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

8 “(A) 100 PERCENT PLANT-BASED FOOD
9 OPTION.—The term ‘100 percent plant-based
10 food option’ means a breakfast or lunch meal
11 option or component that—

12 “(i) includes a meat alternate as de-
13 scribed in—

14 “(I) section 210.10 of title 7,
15 Code of Federal Regulations (or suc-
16 cessor regulations); or

17 “(II) appendix A to part 210 of
18 title 7, Code of Federal Regulations
19 (or successor regulations); and

20 “(ii) does not contain any animal
21 product or byproduct, such as meat, poul-
22 try, honey, fish, dairy, or eggs.

23 “(B) BEGINNING FARMER OR RANCHER.—

24 The term ‘beginning farmer or rancher’ has the
25 meaning given the term in section 343(a) of the

1 Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act
2 (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)).

3 “(C) CERTIFIED ORGANIC FARM.—The
4 term ‘certified organic farm’ has the meaning
5 given the term in section 2103 of the Food, Ag-
6 riculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990
7 (7 U.S.C. 6502).

8 “(D) ELIGIBLE SCHOOL FOOD AUTHOR-
9 ITY.—The term ‘eligible school food authority’
10 means a school food authority that serves stu-
11 dents 50 percent or more of which are eligible
12 for free or reduced price lunch under this Act
13 or free or reduced price breakfast under section
14 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C.
15 1773).

16 “(E) ORGANICALLY PRODUCED.—The
17 term ‘organically produced’ has the meaning
18 given the term in section 2103 of the Food, Ag-
19 riculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990
20 (7 U.S.C. 6502).

21 “(F) PRODUCER.—The term ‘producer’
22 has the meaning given the term in section 2103
23 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and
24 Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6502).

1 “(G) PROGRAM.—The term ‘program’
 2 means the pilot program established under
 3 paragraph (2).

4 “(H) UNDERSERVED PRODUCER.—The
 5 term ‘underserved producer’ means an indi-
 6 vidual (including a member of an Indian Tribe)
 7 that is—

8 “(i) a beginning farmer or rancher;

9 “(ii) a veteran farmer or rancher (as
 10 defined in section 2501(a) of the Food,
 11 Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act
 12 of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 2279(a))); or

13 “(iii) a socially disadvantaged farmer
 14 or rancher (as defined in that section).

15 “(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days
 16 after the date of enactment of the Plant-Powered
 17 School Meals Pilot Act, the Secretary shall establish
 18 a pilot program to award grants to eligible school
 19 food authorities to carry out the activities described
 20 in paragraph (5).

21 “(3) GRANTS.—

22 “(A) TERM.—The term of a grant awarded
 23 under the program shall be 3 years.

1 “(B) AMOUNT.—The Secretary shall award
2 grants under the program in diverse amounts to
3 the extent practicable.

4 “(4) APPLICATION.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to re-
6 ceive a grant under the program, an eligible
7 school food authority shall submit to the Sec-
8 retary an application at such time, in such
9 manner, and containing such information as the
10 Secretary may require, including—

11 “(i) a participatory evaluation plan;
12 and

13 “(ii) a plan for providing culturally
14 appropriate meals.

15 “(B) PRIORITY.—To the maximum extent
16 practicable, in awarding grants under the pro-
17 gram, the Secretary shall give priority to an eli-
18 gible school food authority that will use the
19 grant funds—

20 “(i) to serve a high proportion of chil-
21 dren who are eligible for free or reduced
22 price meals;

23 “(ii) to collaborate with nongovern-
24 mental and community-based organiza-
25 tions, agricultural producers, and other

community partners with respect to the activities described in paragraph (5);

“(iii) to incorporate experiential and culturally appropriate plant-based food, nutrition, or agricultural education activities related to 100 percent plant-based food options in the classroom;

“(iv) to incorporate organically produced 100 percent plant-based food options; and

“(v) to meet any other criteria that the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(5) USE OF FUNDS.—A grant awarded under the program may be used for any of the following activities:

“(A) To contract with qualified third parties for professional development training for food service personnel relating to serving (including preparing, procuring, marketing, and creating menus) 100 percent plant-based food options.

“(B) To provide compensation to each employee who participates in the professional development training described in subparagraph (A) at the regular rate of pay of such employee.

1 “(C) To provide technical assistance and
 2 student engagement and education on 100 per-
 3 cent plant-based food options, including pro-
 4 viding taste tests, recipe development, and cul-
 5 inary education.

6 “(D) To provide compensation for addi-
 7 tional work relating to serving meals that in-
 8 clude a 100 percent plant-based food option.

9 “(E) To conduct outreach to, and cover
 10 costs of procurement of foods from, agricultural
 11 producers of 100 percent plant-based food op-
 12 tions, including—

13 “(i) underserved producers;

14 “(ii) limited resource farmers or
 15 ranchers (as defined by the Secretary);

16 “(iii) producers on a certified organic
 17 farm; and

18 “(iv) local farmers.

19 “(6) RECORDKEEPING REQUIRED.—Each eligi-
 20 ble school food authority awarded a grant under the
 21 program shall keep records of the 100 percent plant-
 22 based food options served, as the Secretary deter-
 23 mines appropriate.

24 “(7) REPORTS.—

1 “(A) SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES.—Not
2 later than 1 year after receiving a grant under
3 the program, and annually for the duration of
4 the grant term, an eligible school food authority
5 shall submit to the Secretary a report on the
6 activities carried out using the grant, including
7 information on—

8 “(i) the number of 100 percent plant-
9 based food options that the eligible school
10 food authority served during the grant pe-
11 riod compared with the preceding school
12 year;

13 “(ii) the number of schools served by
14 the eligible school food authority pursuant
15 to the grant; and

16 “(iii) the number of students served
17 by the eligible school food authority pursu-
18 ant to the grant.

19 “(B) REPORT BY SECRETARY.—With re-
20 spect to each school year during which the Sec-
21 retary receives a report under subparagraph
22 (A), the Secretary shall, not later than 1 year
23 after the date that is the last day of that school
24 year, submit to Congress a report that in-
25 cludes—

1 “(i) a summary of the reports received
 2 during that school year; and

3 “(ii) such information with respect to
 4 the program as the Secretary determines
 5 to be relevant.

6 “(8) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary
 7 shall provide technical assistance and information to
 8 assist eligible school food authorities receiving grants
 9 under the program—

10 “(A) to facilitate the coordination and
 11 sharing of information and resources that may
 12 be applicable to the activities described in para-
 13 graph (5); and

14 “(B) to collect and share information on
 15 best practices.

16 “(9) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
 17 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
 18 this subsection \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2026, to
 19 remain available through fiscal year 2030.”.

20 **SEC. 3. ACCOMMODATING DIETARY REQUIREMENTS.**

21 Section 9(a)(2) of the Richard B. Russell National
 22 School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(a)(2)) is amended—

23 (1) in subparagraph (A)(iii)—

1 (A) by inserting “or other medical or spe-
2 cial dietary need” after “disability” each place
3 it appears; and

4 (B) by striking “or legal guardian” and in-
5 serting “legal guardian, or student”;

6 (2) by striking subparagraphs (B) and (E);

7 (3) by redesignating subparagraphs (C) and
8 (D) as subparagraphs (B) and (C), respectively; and

9 (4) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(D) PILOT PROGRAM.—

11 “(i) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE
12 SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY.—In this sub-
13 paragraph, the term ‘eligible school food
14 authority’ has the meaning given the term
15 in section 18(d)(1).

16 “(ii) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later
17 than 90 days after the date of enactment
18 of the Plant-Powered School Meals Pilot
19 Act, the Secretary shall establish a pilot
20 program to award grants to eligible school
21 food authorities to reimburse the full cost
22 incurred by the eligible school food author-
23 ity of providing nondairy beverages as sub-
24 stitutes for fluid milk under subparagraph
25 (A)(ii).

1 “(iii) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants
2 under this subparagraph, the Secretary
3 may give priority to—

4 “(I) an eligible school food au-
5 thority that serves high proportions of
6 students with lactose intolerance; and

7 “(II) an eligible school food au-
8 thority that demonstrates, as part of
9 the application for a grant under this
10 subparagraph, a need for nondairy
11 beverages for students served by the
12 eligible school food authority due to
13 dietary reasons.

14 “(iv) REPORTS.—

15 “(I) ANNUAL REPORT BY
16 SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY.—Not later
17 than 1 year after receiving a grant
18 under this subparagraph, and on an
19 annual basis for the duration of the
20 grant, an eligible school food authority
21 shall submit to the Secretary a report
22 on the pilot grant program, including
23 information on—

24 “(aa) the number of schools
25 and students that were provided

1 nondairy beverages as substitutes
2 for fluid milk under subpara-
3 graph (A)(ii) by the eligible
4 school food authority; and

5 “(bb) in the case of the final
6 report submitted under this sub-
7 clause, the number of such bev-
8 erages that the eligible school
9 food authority served during the
10 grant period compared with the
11 number of such beverages that
12 the eligible school food authority
13 served during the school year im-
14 mediately preceding the start of
15 the grant period.

16 “(II) REPORT BY THE SEC-
17 RETARY.—Not later than 180 days
18 after the date described in clause (v),
19 the Secretary shall submit to Con-
20 gress a report on the pilot program
21 carried out under this subparagraph,
22 including a summary of the informa-
23 tion included in the reports received
24 under this clause from eligible school
25 food authorities.

1 “(v) SUNSET.—The authority to carry
2 out this subparagraph shall terminate on
3 the date that is 3 years after the date of
4 enactment of the Plant-Powered School
5 Meals Pilot Act.

6 “(vi) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-
7 TIONS.—There is authorized to be appro-
8 priated to carry out this subparagraph
9 \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2026, to remain
10 available until the date described in clause
11 (v).

12 “(E) DEFINITION OF SPECIAL DIETARY
13 NEED.—In this paragraph, the term ‘special di-
14 etary need’ means a dietary need that does not
15 constitute a disability, including a dietary need
16 relating to religious or moral conviction.”.

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