

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5069

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop for consideration of the Congress a poverty line for purposes of the Community Services Block Grant Act, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 13, 2019

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ (for herself, Ms. MENG, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Ms. MOORE, Ms. TLAIB, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, and Ms. LEE of California) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop for consideration of the Congress a poverty line for purposes of the Community Services Block Grant Act, 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 “The Recognizing Pov-
5 erty Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ADEQUACY OF THE POVERTY**
2 **LINE; DEVELOPMENT OF POVERTY LINE.**

3 (a) **ASSESSMENT.**—The Secretary of Health and
4 Human Services, in collaboration with the Bureau of the
5 Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shall make
6 a contract with the Committee on National Statistics of
7 the National Academy of Sciences to assess the adequacy
8 of the poverty line (as defined in section 673(2) of the
9 Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C.
10 9902(2))) as a measure of the resources families need to
11 afford basic goods and services.

12 (b) **DEVELOPMENT OF POVERTY LINE.**—The Sec-
13 retary of Health and Human Services, in collaboration
14 with the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor
15 Statistics, shall make a contract with the Committee on
16 National Statistics of the National Academy of Sciences
17 to propose a poverty guide for purposes of section 673(2)
18 of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C.
19 9902(2)) that accounts for an up-to-date adequate family
20 income level. Such poverty line shall be developed for ref-
21 erence family consisting of 2 adults and their 2 related
22 children and shall be an amount equal to the income that
23 would be sufficient to make ends meet, accounting for ex-
24 penditures on food, clothing, shelter, utilities, “new neces-
25 sities” such as internet, and other needs identified, modi-
26 fied as follows:

1 (1) Adjusted for family size using the best
2 available equivalence scales that consider economies
3 of scale.

4 (2) Adjusted for differences in the cost of goods
5 and services among States, sub-State non-metropoli-
6 tan areas, and metropolitan areas based on the best
7 available data.

8 (3) Adjusted to account for data on levels of
9 spending on goods and services in prior years and
10 adjusted for cost changes from said prior years to
11 the current year.

12 (4) Increased for needs related to health insur-
13 ance for family members, work expenses for the fam-
14 ily, and child care needs for each child under the age
15 of 13 in the family, including identification and con-
16 sideration of “new necessities” such as internet ac-
17 cess and funds needed to secure children’s equal
18 educational opportunity.

19 Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection,
20 the poverty line proposed under this subsection shall not
21 be less than the poverty line then in effect under such sec-
22 tion.

23 (c) REQUIRED FACTORS.—For purposes of sub-
24 section (b), the Secretary shall consider—

- 1 (1) relevant empirical data on prevalence at
2 various income levels of material hardships such as
3 food—
- 4 (A) insecurity,
5 (B) falling behind on rent, mortgage, or
6 utility bills, eviction or overcrowding, and
7 (C) experiencing homelessness or living
8 doubled up in another person’s home,
- 9 (2) past Lower Living Standards implemented
10 by the Department of Labor,
11 (3) the supplemental poverty measure of the
12 Bureau of the Census,
13 (4) the Self Sufficiency Standards initially de-
14 veloped by Diana Pearce and Wider Opportunities
15 for Women,
16 (5) the Census Bureau’s Survey of Income and
17 Program Participation, and
18 (6) other standards of income adequacy created
19 by experts and public commissions.
- 20 (d) PUBLICATION.—The poverty line proposed under
21 this section shall be updated and published annually.

○