

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4451

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to enhance direct certification under the school lunch program.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 16, 2025

Mrs. HAYES (for herself, Mr. BACON, and Ms. ROSS) 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 enhance direct certification under the school lunch program.

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 “Caregivers, Access, and
5 Responsible Expansion for Kids Act of 2025” or the
6 “CARE for Kids Act of 2025”.

7 **SEC. 2. ENHANCING DIRECT CERTIFICATION.**

8 Section 9(b)(5) of the Richard B. Russell National
9 School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(5)) is amended—

1 (1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A),
2 by inserting “(including any school operated by the
3 Bureau of Indian Education)” before “may certify”;
4 and

5 (2) in subparagraph (E)—

6 (A) in clause (i), by striking “or” at the
7 end;

8 (B) in clause (ii)—

9 (i) by striking “who” and inserting
10 “whom”; and

11 (ii) by striking the period at the end
12 and inserting a semicolon; and

13 (C) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(iii) a child whose placement with a
15 caregiver was carried out with the involve-
16 ment of an agency that administers a
17 State plan under part B or E of title IV
18 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601
19 et seq.) or a tribal child welfare agency,
20 without regard to whether the agency is re-
21 sponsible for the care and placement of the
22 child;

23 “(iv) a child for whom an adoption as-
24 sistance payment is made under section
25 473(a) of the Social Security Act (42

1 U.S.C. 673(a)) or under a similar State-
 2 funded or State-operated program, as de-
 3 termined by the Secretary;

4 “(v) a child for whom a kinship
 5 guardianship assistance payment is made
 6 under section 473(d) of the Social Security
 7 Act (42 U.S.C. 673(d)) or under a similar
 8 State-funded or State-operated program,
 9 as determined by the Secretary, without
 10 regard to whether the child was previously
 11 in foster care; or

12 “(vi) a child of a family that—
 13 “(I) lives in housing dedicated to
 14 low-income families with a caregiver
 15 who is a grandparent or another older
 16 person that cares for the child full-
 17 time; or

18 “(II) receives housing or housing
 19 assistance under the Native American
 20 Housing Assistance and Self-Deter-
 21 mination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C.
 22 4101 et seq.).”.

23 **SEC. 3. EXTENDED ELIGIBILITY.**

24 Section 9(b)(9) of the Richard B. Russell National
 25 School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(9)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (D);

(2) by inserting after subparagraph (B) the following:

“(C) ELIGIBILITY OF TRANSFERRED CHILDREN.—

“(i) DEFINITION OF COVERED CHILD.—In this subparagraph, the term ‘covered child’ means a child that—

“(I) has been determined eligible for free or reduced price meals under this Act by a local educational agency (referred to in this subparagraph as the ‘original local educational agency’); and

“(II) transfers to another school that is under the jurisdiction of a different local educational agency (referred to in this subparagraph as the ‘new local educational agency’).

“(ii) ELIGIBILITY.—An eligibility determination made by an original local educational agency with respect to a covered child shall be transferred to, and honored by, the new local educational agency, in-

cluding the period for which that determination was authorized, subject to an extension under clause (iii).

“(iii) EXTENSION OF DURATION.—A new local educational agency shall honor the eligibility determination for a covered child under clause (ii) for a period that is 1 year longer than the period for which that determination was authorized by the original local educational agency if the covered child began living with a caregiver—

“(I) in the 12-month period preceding the date on which the covered child is enrolled in a school under the jurisdiction of a new local educational agency; and

“(II) who is—

“(aa) a grandparent or other relative and has legal authority to secure services for the child through an educational or healthcare consent affidavit, power of attorney, or other legal documentation; or

1 “(bb) a grandparent or
 2 other relative and has legal cus-
 3 tody of the child or has com-
 4 menced the process of seeking
 5 legal custody of the child in a
 6 court of law.”; and

7 (3) in subparagraph (D) (as so redesignated)—

8 (A) by redesignating clauses (i) and (ii) as
 9 subclauses (I) and (II), respectively, and in-
 10 denting appropriately;

11 (B) in the matter preceding subclause (I)
 12 (as so redesignated), by striking “Except as”
 13 and all that follows through “(3)(H)(ii)” and
 14 inserting the following:

15 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as other-
 16 wise specified in clause (ii), subparagraph
 17 (C), subparagraphs (E) and (H)(ii) of
 18 paragraph (3)”; and

19 (C) by adding at the end the following:

20 “(ii) EXTENSION FOR CERTAIN CHIL-
 21 DREN.—A school food authority shall ex-
 22 tend the eligibility determination made by
 23 a local educational agency with respect to
 24 a child for a period that is 1 year longer
 25 than the period for which that determina-

tion was authorized by the local educational agency, if the child began living with a caregiver—

“(I) in the 12-month period preceding the date on which the covered child is enrolled in the new school; and

“(II) who is—

“(aa) a grandparent or other relative and has legal authority to secure services for the child through an educational or healthcare consent affidavit, power of attorney, or other legal documentation; or

“(bb) a grandparent or other relative and has legal custody of the child or has commenced the process of seeking legal custody of the child in a court of law.”.

SEC. 4. EXPANDING AUTOMATIC ELIGIBILITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 9(b)(12)(A) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(12)(A)) is amended—

1 (1) by conforming the margins of clauses (iv)
2 through (vii) to the margin of clause (iii); and

3 (2) in clause (vii)—

4 (A) in subclause (I), by striking “or” at
5 the end;

6 (B) in subclause (II)—

7 (i) by striking “who” and inserting
8 “whom”; and

9 (ii) by striking the period at the end
10 and inserting a semicolon; and

11 (C) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(III) a child whose placement
13 with a caregiver was carried out with
14 the involvement of an agency that ad-
15 ministers a State plan under part B
16 or E of title IV of the Social Security
17 Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or a tribal
18 child welfare agency, without regard
19 to whether the agency is responsible
20 for the care and placement of the
21 child;

22 “(IV) a child for whom an adop-
23 tion assistance payment is made
24 under section 473(a) of the Social Se-
25 curity Act (42 U.S.C. 673(a)) or

1 under a similar State-funded or State-
2 operated program, as determined by
3 the Secretary;

4 “(V) a child for whom a kinship
5 guardianship assistance payment is
6 made under section 473(d) of the So-
7 cial Security Act (42 U.S.C. 673(d))
8 or under a similar State-funded or
9 State-operated program, as deter-
10 mined by the Secretary, without re-
11 gard to whether the child was pre-
12 viously in foster care; or

13 “(VI) a child of a family that—

14 “(aa) lives in housing dedi-
15 cated to low-income families with
16 a caregiver who is a grandparent
17 or another older person that
18 cares for the child full-time; or

19 “(bb) receives housing or
20 housing assistance under the Na-
21 tive American Housing Assist-
22 ance and Self-Determination Act
23 of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4101 et
24 seq.).”.

1 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 9(d)(2) of
 2 the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42
 3 U.S.C. 1758(d)(2)) is amended—

4 (1) in subparagraph (D), by striking “clauses
 5 (iv) or (v)” and inserting “clauses (ii), (iii), (iv), (v),
 6 or (vii)”;

7 (2) in subparagraph (E), by adding “or” at the
 8 end;

9 (3) by striking subparagraph (F); and

10 (4) by redesignating subparagraph (G) as sub-
 11 paragraph (F) and conforming the margin of sub-
 12 paragraph (F) (as so redesignated) appropriately.

13 **SEC. 5. MEDICAID DIRECT CERTIFICATION.**

14 Section 9(b)(15)(A)(i) of the Richard B. Russell Na-
 15 tional School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(15)(A)(i)) is
 16 amended—

17 (1) in the matter preceding subclause (I), by
 18 striking “The term” and inserting the following:

19 “(I) IN GENERAL.—The term”;

20 (2) in subclause (I), by redesignating items (aa)
 21 and (bb) as subitems (AA) and (BB), respectively;

22 (3) by redesignating subclauses (I) and (II) as
 23 items (aa) and (bb), respectively;

24 (4) in item (bb), as so redesignated, by striking
 25 “regulations) with a child described in subclause

1 (I)” and inserting “regulations)) with a child de-
2 scribed in item (aa)”;

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

4 “(II) OTHER CHILDREN.—The term
5 ‘eligible child’ includes a child that receives
6 medical assistance under the Medicaid pro-
7 gram—

8 “(aa) under subclause (I) of sec-
9 tion 1902(a)(10)(A)(i) of the Social
10 Security Act (42 U.S.C.
11 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)) on the basis of
12 receiving aid or assistance under the
13 State plan approved under part E of
14 title IV of that Act (42 U.S.C. 670 et
15 seq.) or by reason of section 473(b) of
16 that Act (42 U.S.C. 673(b)); or

17 “(bb) under subclause (II) of sec-
18 tion 1902(a)(10)(A)(i) of that Act (42
19 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)) on the
20 basis of receiving supplemental secu-
21 rity income benefits.”.

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