

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5655

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to require mandatory certification for certain students and reduce stigma associated with unpaid school meal fees, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

Ms. OMAR (for herself, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. BISHOP, Ms. BROWNLEY, Mr. CARSON, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CORREA, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. EVANS of Pennsylvania, Mr. GARCIA of California, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MULLIN, Ms. NORTON, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. PETERS, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. POCAN, Ms. PRESSLEY, Mrs. RAMIREZ, Ms. SALINAS, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. SIMON, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. STANSBURY, Mr. TAKANO, Ms. TLAIB, Ms. TOKUDA, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, and Ms. WILSON of Florida) 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 require mandatory certification for certain students and reduce stigma associated with unpaid school meal fees, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “No Shame at School
3 Act of 2025”.

4 **SEC. 2. UNPAID MEAL DEBT.**

5 (a) **MANDATORY CERTIFICATION.**—Section 9(b)(5) of
6 the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42
7 U.S.C. 1758(b)(5)) is amended—

8 (1) in the heading, by striking “DISCRE-
9 TIONARY” and inserting “MANDATORY”;

10 (2) by striking “any local” and inserting “a
11 local”; and

12 (3) by striking “may” and inserting “shall”.

13 (b) **RETROACTIVE REIMBURSEMENT.**—Section
14 9(b)(9)(C) of the Richard B. Russell National School
15 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(9)(C)) is amended—

16 (1) by striking “Except” and inserting the fol-
17 lowing:

18 “(i) **IN GENERAL.**—Except”;

19 (2) by redesignating clauses (i) and (ii) as sub-
20 clauses (I) and (II); and

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

22 “(ii) **RETROACTIVITY.**—A local edu-
23 cational agency shall revise a previously
24 submitted meal claim to reflect the eligi-
25 bility approval of a child for free or re-
26 duced price meals for the period that be-

1 gins on the first day of the current school
2 year.

3 “(iii) MEAL CLAIM DEFINED.—In this
4 subsection, the term ‘meal claim’ means
5 any documentation provided by a school
6 food authority to a State agency in order
7 to receive reimbursement for the cost of a
8 meal served to a child by such school food
9 authority.”.

10 (c) REDUCING STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH UNPAID
11 SCHOOL MEAL FEES.—Section 9(b)(10) of the Richard
12 B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
13 1758(b)(10)) is amended to read as follows:

14 “(10) REDUCING STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH UN-
15 PAID SCHOOL MEAL FEES.—

16 “(A) OVERT IDENTIFICATION PROHIBITED.—A
17 local educational agency or school food authority
18 may not, based on the status of a covered child as
19 a covered child—

20 “(i) physically segregate such covered
21 child;

22 “(ii) overtly identify such covered child—

23 “(I) through the use of special tokens
24 or tickets; or

1 “(II) by an announcement or a pub-
2 lished list of names; or

3 “(iii) identify or stigmatize such covered
4 child by any other means.

5 “(B) ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION BY LOCAL
6 EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—For any covered child who
7 is a member of a household that owes a week or
8 more of unpaid school meal fees, a local educational
9 agency shall—

10 “(i) attempt to directly certify such cov-
11 ered child for free meals under paragraph (4)
12 or (5); or

13 “(ii) in a case where the local educational
14 agency is not able to directly certify such cov-
15 ered child under paragraph (4) or (5), provide
16 to the household of such covered child—

17 “(I) a household application and ap-
18 plicable descriptive material; and

19 “(II) written and oral communications
20 to encourage submission of the application.

21 “(C) COLLECTION OF UNPAID SCHOOL MEAL
22 FEES.—In attempting to collect unpaid school meal
23 fees from a household, a local educational agency or
24 school food authority may not—

1 “(i) except as described in subparagraph
2 (D), direct any communication regarding un-
3 paid school meal fees to a covered child who is
4 a member of such household;

5 “(ii) withhold educational opportunities
6 (including grades and participation in extra-
7 curricular activities or local educational agency
8 programs or services) from, or otherwise stig-
9 matize, a covered child due to the status of the
10 covered child as a covered child; or

11 “(iii) use a debt collector (as such term is
12 defined in section 803 of the Consumer Credit
13 Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1692a)).

14 “(D) LETTERS.—A school food authority may
15 require that a covered child deliver a sealed letter
16 addressed to a parent or guardian of the covered
17 child that contains a communication relating to un-
18 paid school meal fees, subject to the condition that
19 the letter shall not be distributed to the covered
20 child in a manner that stigmatizes the covered child.

21 “(E) ELIMINATING STIGMA IN MEAL SERV-
22 ICE.—In providing a meal to a covered child, a local
23 educational agency or school food authority may not,
24 based on the status of the covered child as a covered
25 child, dispose of or take away from the covered child

1 any food that has already been served to such cov-
2 ered child.

3 “(F) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

4 “(i) COVERED CHILD.—The term ‘covered
5 child’ means a child who—

6 “(I) is—

7 “(aa) enrolled in a school that
8 participates in the school lunch pro-
9 gram under this Act or the school
10 breakfast program under section 4 of
11 the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42
12 U.S.C. 1773); and

13 “(bb) is a member of a household
14 that owes unpaid school meal fees; or

15 “(II) is eligible for a free or reduced
16 price lunch under this section.

17 “(ii) UNPAID SCHOOL MEAL FEES.—The
18 term ‘unpaid school meal fees’ means out-
19 standing fees owed by a household to a local
20 educational agency for lunches under this Act
21 or breakfasts under section 4 of the Child Nu-
22 trition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773).”.

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