

[118H9878]

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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

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.

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**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Ms. OMAR introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee  
on \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. UNPAID MEAL DEBT.**

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

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

7 (2) by striking “any local” and inserting “a  
8 local”; and

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

10 (b) RETROACTIVE REIMBURSEMENT.—Section  
11 9(b)(9)(C) of the Richard B. Russell National School  
12 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(9)(C)) is amended—

13 (1) by striking “Except” and inserting the fol-  
14 lowing:

15 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Except”;

16 (2) by redesignating clauses (i) and (ii) as sub-  
17 clauses (I) and (II); and

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

19 “(ii) RETROACTIVITY.—A local edu-  
20 cational agency shall revise a previously  
21 submitted meal claim to reflect the eligi-  
22 bility approval of a child for free or re-  
23 duced price meals for the period that be-  
24 gins on the first day of the current school  
25 year.

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

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

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

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

18 “(i) physically segregate such covered  
19 child;

20 “(ii) overtly identify such covered child—

21 “(I) through the use of special tokens  
22 or tickets; or

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

1           “(iii) identify or stigmatize such covered  
2           child by any other means.

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

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

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

15               “(I) a household application and ap-  
16               plicable descriptive material; and

17               “(II) written and oral communications  
18               to encourage submission of the application.

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

23               “(i) except as described in subparagraph  
24          (D), direct any communication regarding un-

1           paid school meal fees to a covered child who is  
2           a member of such household;

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 “(I) is—

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

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

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

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