

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3651

To prohibit school food authorities and local educational agencies from collecting unpaid school meal fees during the COVID–19 pandemic, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 7, 2020

Ms. SMITH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To prohibit school food authorities and local educational agencies from collecting unpaid school meal fees during the COVID–19 pandemic, 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 “Suspend School Meal
5 Debt Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. SCHOOL MEAL DEBT DURING COVID–19 PANDEMIC.**

7 (a) DEFINITION OF EMERGENCY PERIOD.—In this
8 section, the term “emergency period” means the period
9 beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and ending

1 on the date that is 30 days after the date on which the
2 public health emergency declared by the Secretary of
3 Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Pub-
4 lic Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d) on January 31,
5 2020, with respect to COVID–19 is terminated.

6 (b) DEBT COLLECTION PROHIBITION.—Notwith-
7 standing any other provision of law, during the emergency
8 period, a school food authority or a local educational agen-
9 cy participating in the school lunch program under the
10 Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
11 1751 et seq.) or the school breakfast program under sec-
12 tion 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C.
13 1773) may not—

14 (1) collect unpaid meal fees (including late fees
15 associated with unpaid meals) under those pro-
16 grams; or

17 (2) use a debt collector (as defined in section
18 803 of the Consumer Credit Protection Act (15
19 U.S.C. 1692a)) to collect those unpaid meal fees.

20 (c) CANCELLATION OF MEAL DEBTS.—The Sec-
21 retary of Agriculture shall reimburse each school food au-
22 thority and local educational agency participating in a pro-
23 gram described in subsection (b) for unpaid meal fees (in-
24 cluding late fees associated with unpaid meals) owed to

1 that authority or agency as of the date of enactment of
2 this Act.

○