

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4812

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to institutions of higher education to provide free meals to low-income students through existing on-campus meal programs, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 20, 2023

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mr. BOWMAN, Ms. BUSH, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. CARSON, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. DESAULNIER, Ms. ESCOBAR, Mr. EVANS, Mrs. HAYES, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. MENG, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. NADLER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. PANNETTA, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. PORTER, Mr. SABLAN, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. SEWELL, Ms. STANSBURY, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. TITUS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, and Ms. WILSON of Florida) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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## A BILL

To amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to authorize the Secretary of Education to make grants to institutions of higher education to provide free meals to low-income students through existing on-campus meal programs, 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 “Food for Thought Act  
3 of 2023”.

4 **SEC. 2. FREE MEALS FOR LOW-INCOME COLLEGE STU-**  
5 **DENTS.**

6 Part A of title IV of the Higher Education Act of  
7 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.) is amended by inserting  
8 after subpart 7 the following:

9 **“Subpart 8—Meals for Low-Income Students**

10 **“SEC. 420A. FREE MEALS FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS.**

11 “(a) AUTHORIZATION.—From amounts made avail-  
12 able under subsection (j), the Secretary is authorized to  
13 award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities  
14 to provide free meals to low-income students through on-  
15 campus meal programs.

16 “(b) APPLICATIONS.—

17 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desiring  
18 to receive an award under subsection (a) shall sub-  
19 mit an application to the Secretary at such time, in  
20 such manner, and containing such information as  
21 the Secretary may require. Such application shall in-  
22 clude—

23 “(A) a plan for identifying eligible students  
24 and conducting outreach; and

25 “(B) an assurance that the eligible entity  
26 will—

1           “(i) conduct outreach to students with  
2           respect to the grant program under this  
3           section, encourage student participation in  
4           such program, and inform students of—

5                   “(I) their potential eligibility for  
6                   participation in other Federal, State,  
7                   and local benefit and support pro-  
8                   grams, including means-tested Fed-  
9                   eral benefits programs such as SNAP;  
10                  and

11                   “(II) the processes for obtaining  
12                   more information, confirming eligi-  
13                   bility, and accessing benefits under  
14                   such programs;

15           “(ii) evaluate institutional policies re-  
16           lating to the purchase of on-campus meal  
17           plans and whether such policies create bar-  
18           riers to enrollment and persistence for low-  
19           income students;

20                   “(iii) identify ways to mitigate any in-  
21                   stitutional policies that are found, through  
22                   the evaluation described in clause (ii), to  
23                   create barriers described in such clause;  
24                  and

1           “(iv) in the case of an eligible entity  
2           that is a consortia of eligible institutions of  
3           higher education that includes eligible in-  
4           stitutions that do not have on-campus meal  
5           programs, provide an explanation with re-  
6           spect to how the eligible entity will ensure  
7           that low-income students attending such  
8           institutions will be able to easily access  
9           free meals provided under this section.

10           “(2) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this  
11           section, the Secretary shall give priority to—

12           “(A) an eligible entity that is an eligible  
13           institution of higher education that is—

14           “(i) a community college;

15           “(ii) a minority-serving institution de-  
16           scribed in section 371(a); or

17           “(iii) located in an area served by a  
18           local educational agency that is eligible for  
19           special assistance payments under section  
20           11(a)(1) of the Richard B. Russell Na-  
21           tional School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.  
22           1759a(a)(1)); and

23           “(B) an eligible entity that is a consortia  
24           of eligible institutions of higher education, in  
25           which at least 50 percent of such institutions

1           meet at least 1 of the requirements under  
2           clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (A).

3           “(c) MANDATORY ACTIVITIES.—

4           “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that re-  
5           ceives a grant under this section shall use such  
6           grant funds to provide, through on-campus meal  
7           programs, not fewer than 1, and not more than 10,  
8           free meals per week to each low-income student se-  
9           lected by such entity to participate in the program  
10          under this section.

11          “(2) PRIORITY.—In selecting low-income stu-  
12          dents to participate in the program under this sec-  
13          tion, an eligible entity shall give priority to—

14                 “(A) students with the greatest financial  
15                 need; and

16                 “(B) students who indicate that they are  
17                 experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity,  
18                 homelessness, or other insecurity with respect  
19                 to basic needs.

20          “(d) PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES.—In addition to the  
21          mandatory activities in subsection (c), an eligible entity  
22          that receives a grant under this section may use not more  
23          than 10 percent of such grant funds to—

24                 “(1) facilitate the enrollment of on-campus ven-  
25                 dors as authorized retailers in SNAP;

1           “(2) support the operation of an on-campus  
2 food pantry; and

3           “(3) purchase food infrastructure equipment,  
4 including microwaves, refrigerators, and other such  
5 equipment determined by the Secretary to be nec-  
6 essary.

7           “(e) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Not more than 5 per-  
8 cent of the grant funds provided to an eligible entity under  
9 this section for any fiscal year may be used for administra-  
10 tive purposes.

11          “(f) GRANT PERIOD.—Grants awarded to eligible en-  
12 tities under this section shall be for a period of 5 years.

13          “(g) CAMPUS MEAL PROGRAM.—Eligible entities re-  
14 ceiving grants under this section may contract with third-  
15 party food service vendors to provide on-campus meals.

16          “(h) REPORTS.—

17               “(1) RECIPIENT REPORTS.—

18                       “(A) IN GENERAL.—At the end of the 5-  
19 year grant period, an eligible entity that re-  
20 ceives a grant under this section shall submit to  
21 the Secretary a report on—

22                               “(i) how such entity used the grant  
23 funds, including the shares of such funds  
24 used for each of the activities described in  
25 subsections (c), (d)(1), and (d)(2); and

1           “(ii) the success rates of students who  
2 participated in the grant program under  
3 this section (using benchmarks such as  
4 persistence, coursework completion, trans-  
5 fer, and completion rates).

6           “(B) DISAGGREGATION.—The information  
7 reported in subparagraph (A)(ii) shall be  
8 disaggregated, where possible, by—

9           “(i) race;

10           “(ii) ethnicity;

11           “(iii) Pell recipient status;

12           “(iv) income;

13           “(v) gender; and

14           “(vi) age.

15           “(2) SECRETARY REPORT.—

16           “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year  
17 after the Secretary receives the reports required  
18 under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit  
19 a report to Congress on the overall impact of  
20 the program under this section.

21           “(B) DISAGGREGATION.—The information  
22 described in subparagraph (A) shall be  
23 disaggregated, where possible, by—

24           “(i) sectors and types of institutions;

1                   “(ii) whether an institution is a mi-  
2                   nority-serving institution described in sec-  
3                   tion 371(a); and

4                   “(iii) whether an institution has an  
5                   open admissions policy.

6           “(i) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
7           gress that an eligible entity awarded a grant under this  
8           section should, to the extent practicable—

9                   “(1) ensure meals served pursuant to a grant  
10                  under this section are consistent with the nutritional  
11                  requirements and goals of the most recent Dietary  
12                  Guidelines for Americans published under section  
13                  301 of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Re-  
14                  lated Research Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5341);

15                  “(2) ensure access to vegetarian meals, vegan  
16                  meals, culturally and religiously appropriate meals,  
17                  and meals that accommodate common food allergies;

18                  “(3) build and encourage the use of on-campus  
19                  food pantries;

20                  “(4) encourage on-campus vendors to increase  
21                  the use of climate-friendly options; and

22                  “(5) buy products to reduce the greenhouse gas  
23                  emissions associated with providing free meals to  
24                  students and purchasing food infrastructure equip-  
25                  ment.



1       “(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
3 such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023 and  
4 each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years.

5       “(k) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6           “(1) COMMUNITY COLLEGE.—The term ‘com-  
7 munity college’ means a public institution of higher  
8 education at which the highest degree that is pre-  
9 dominantly awarded to students is an associate’s de-  
10 gree, including 2-year Tribal Colleges or Universities  
11 under section 316 and public 2-year institutions of  
12 higher education operated by a State.

13           “(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-  
14 tity’ means—

15           “(A) an eligible institution of higher edu-  
16 cation that has an on-campus meal program  
17 that is provided through an institutionally  
18 owned or operated food service or one or more  
19 third-party food service vendors; or

20           “(B) a consortia of eligible institutions of  
21 higher education, of which at least one has an  
22 on-campus meal program that is provided  
23 through an institutionally owned or operated  
24 food service or one or more third-party food  
25 service vendors, provided that such an eligible

1 institution with an on-campus meal program is  
2 geographically accessible to the students of the  
3 eligible institutions that do not have on-campus  
4 meal programs.

5 “(3) ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-  
6 CATION.—The term ‘eligible institution of higher  
7 education’ means an institution of higher education  
8 under section 101 or 102(a)(1)(B) in which at least  
9 30 percent of the undergraduate students enrolled at  
10 such institution are eligible to receive a Federal Pell  
11 Grant.

12 “(4) SNAP.—The term ‘SNAP’ means the sup-  
13 plemental nutrition assistance program (as defined  
14 in section 3(t) of the Food and Nutrition Act of  
15 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(t))).”.

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