

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9980

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Kosher and Halal Foods, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 11, 2024

Ms. MENG introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish an Office of Kosher and Halal Foods, 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. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) There are approximately 7.5 million Jewish
6 Americans and 3.45 million Muslim Americans.

1 (2) Thirty-five percent of Jewish Americans
2 and 83 percent of Muslim Americans follow reli-
3 giously required dietary restrictions.

4 (3) Meaningful percentages of Jewish and Mus-
5 lim American communities are food insecure and
6 could benefit from Department of Agriculture emer-
7 gency food programs such as the Emergency Food
8 Assistance Program (commonly known and referred
9 to in this section as “TEFAP”).

10 (4) Studies have shown that people in the
11 United States that follow religiously required diets
12 will forgo food even if hungry rather than eat food
13 that is forbidden to them.

14 (5) Kosher and halal food options in these pro-
15 grams are therefore essential for individuals adher-
16 ing to religiously required dietary restrictions.

17 (6) Estimates suggest that 50 percent of the
18 food on grocery store shelves in the United States
19 has at least one kosher certification.

20 (7) Despite the fact that kosher and halal prod-
21 ucts are readily available in the commercial market-
22 place, while the Department of Agriculture has ex-
23 panded kosher and halal options available through
24 TEFAP, Department of Agriculture feeding pro-
25 grams currently do not provide sufficient options to

1 fully meet the needs of people in the United States
2 with religiously required dietary restrictions. For ex-
3 ample, TEFAP currently only requires 8 certified
4 kosher products and 1 halal certified product.

5 (8) Congress has in the past, recognized the
6 need to increase access to emergency kosher and
7 halal food in the Nation’s food programs.

8 (9) Through TEFAP, Congress previously
9 sought to expand access to kosher and halal food
10 through Department of Agriculture programs by
11 mandating that the Secretary “shall finalize and im-
12 plement a plan to increase the purchase of Kosher
13 and Halal food”.

14 (10) Nevertheless, the lack of current kosher
15 and halal food options prevent those with religiously
16 required diets from fully participating in the Na-
17 tion’s food programs and are fundamentally unfair
18 and inequitable.

19 (11) As part of the United States National
20 Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, the Department
21 of Agriculture is committed to work “to ensure equal
22 access to all USDA feeding programs for USDA
23 customers with religious dietary needs. This will in-
24 clude increasing commercially available kosher and
25 halal foods that are priorities for Jewish and Muslim

1 program participants; expanding the number of ko-
2 sher or halal certified foods in USDA’s food procure-
3 ment; training schools on how to meet students’ reli-
4 gious dietary needs for the National School Lunch
5 and School Breakfast programs; and expanding out-
6 reach and technical assistance for kosher and halal
7 meat processors.”.

8 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF KOSHER AND HALAL FOODS.**

9 The Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department
10 of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6901
11 note et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
12 lowing:

13 **“SEC. 310. OFFICE OF KOSHER AND HALAL FOODS.**

14 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months
15 after the date of the enactment of this section, the Sec-
16 retary shall establish in the Department an Office of Ko-
17 sher and Halal Foods (referred to in this section as the
18 ‘Office’).

19 “(b) DIRECTOR.—The Secretary shall appoint a Di-
20 rector of the Office who shall—

21 “(1) be an individual with expertise in feeding
22 programs carried out by the Secretary, national sup-
23 ply logistics, and religiously required diets; and

1 “(2) be responsible for carrying out the mission
2 and responsibilities of the Office as specified in this
3 section.

4 “(c) MISSION.—The mission of the Office shall be to
5 provide guidance and expertise to the Secretary necessary
6 to ensure that people in the United States with religiously
7 required diets have full, fair, and equal access to all food
8 programs administered by the Secretary.

9 “(d) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Office shall be respon-
10 sible for engaging in activities to carry out the mission
11 described in subsection (c), including—

12 “(1) advising on the cost-effective procurement
13 of kosher and halal food for distribution through
14 programs administered by the Secretary;

15 “(2) assisting local and regional food banks and
16 pantries with the cost-effective procurement of ko-
17 sher and halal food;

18 “(3) advising the Secretary on the establish-
19 ment of a national kosher and halal emergency food
20 bank and distribution network;

21 “(4) working with industry stakeholders to sup-
22 port the Department in securing kosher and halal
23 food across food groups, to allow pantries to provide
24 balanced pantry bags aligned with the Dietary
25 Guidelines for Americans established under section

1 301 of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Re-
2 lated Research Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5341);

3 “(5) advising the Secretary on the needs of stu-
4 dents with religiously required dietary restrictions in
5 the covered nutrition programs;

6 “(6) advocating for, and supporting funding ini-
7 tiatives for, increased access to kosher and halal
8 food options in feeding programs administered by
9 the Secretary;

10 “(7) providing educational resources to pro-
11 ducers, food banks, schools, food pantries, and other
12 emergency food providers who contract with the Sec-
13 retary to distribute food on kosher and halal require-
14 ments to assist such producers, food banks, schools,
15 food pantries, and other emergency food providers in
16 ensuring equal access to their programs for individ-
17 uals who present with religious required diets;

18 “(8) conducting research and collecting data, in
19 partnership with the Economic Research Service, on
20 kosher and halal food in the United States and food
21 insecurity in the Jewish and Muslim American com-
22 munities; and

23 “(9) administering any pilot, grant, or other
24 programs administered by the Department that are
25 designed to increase access to kosher and halal food

1 under the emergency food assistance program estab-
2 lished under the Emergency Food Assistance Act of
3 1983 (7 U.S.C. 7501 et seq.).

4 “(e) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 1 year
5 after the date of the enactment of this section, and annu-
6 ally thereafter, the Office shall submit to Congress a re-
7 port on the activities to be carried out by the Office and
8 any relevant data relating to such activities and goals for
9 the Office for the following year.

10 “(f) COVERED NUTRITION PROGRAM DEFINED.—In
11 this section, the term ‘covered nutrition program’ means—

12 “(1) the school lunch program established
13 under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch
14 Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.);

15 “(2) the school breakfast program established
16 under section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966
17 (42 U.S.C. 1773); and

18 “(3) the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Pro-
19 gram established under section 18(g) of the Richard
20 B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C.
21 1769(g)).

22 “(g) FUNDING.—

23 “(1) MANDATORY FUNDING.—Of the funds of
24 the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Secretary
25 shall use to carry out this section \$1,600,000 for

1 each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029, to remain
2 available until expended.

3 “(2) DISCRETIONARY FUNDING.—There are au-
4 thorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 \$1,600,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through
6 2029, to remain available until expended.”.

○