

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4896

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish the child care innovation nutrition pilot program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 24, 2026

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. SHAHEEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish the child care innovation nutrition pilot program, 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 “Child Care Innovation
5 Advancement Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

1 (1) families across the United States are strug-
 2 gling to access affordable, quality child care due to
 3 a shortage of child care providers;

4 (2) local communities have responded to the
 5 child care shortage with innovative solutions that in-
 6 crease child care supply by reducing barriers to
 7 entry for potential providers, including child care
 8 pods, multi-unit child care facilities, and employer-
 9 provided child care programs; and

10 (3) while Federal nutrition programs aid in pro-
 11 viding nutritious foods to young children in child
 12 care settings, many recent innovative child care solu-
 13 tions have found those programs difficult to access.

14 **SEC. 3. CHILD CARE INNOVATION NUTRITION PILOT PRO-**
 15 **GRAM.**

16 The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act
 17 (7 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
 18 the following:

19 **“SEC. 30. CHILD CARE INNOVATION NUTRITION PILOT PRO-**
 20 **GRAM.**

21 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after
 22 the date of enactment of the Child Care Innovation Ad-
 23 vancement Act of 2026, the Secretary shall carry out a
 24 pilot program, to be known as the ‘child care innovation
 25 nutrition pilot program’ (referred to in this section as the

1 ‘pilot program’), under which an organized child care pro-
2 gram operating in a site that is not a private home (in-
3 cluding a commercial space, a community center, a house
4 of worship, or a space provided by an employer) may re-
5 ceive reimbursement for the purchase of nutritious food
6 for meals provided to children under the care of the orga-
7 nized child care program.

8 “(b) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive reim-
9 bursement under the pilot program, an organized child
10 care program shall be—

11 “(1) operating under the auspices of a spon-
12 soring organization; and

13 “(2) licensed or approved to operate by the
14 State in which the organized child care program is
15 located.

16 “(c) DURATION.—An organized child care program
17 may receive reimbursement under the pilot program for
18 not more than 3 years.

19 “(d) REIMBURSEMENT.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An organized child care
21 program participating in the pilot program shall be
22 reimbursed under the pilot program at the same rate
23 at which a family or group day care home is reim-
24 bursed under a similar Federal child care nutrition
25 program.

1 “(2) SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS.—A spon-
2 soring organization of an organized child care pro-
3 gram participating in the pilot program shall be re-
4 imbursed under the pilot program in the same man-
5 ner that a sponsoring organization of a family or
6 group day care home is reimbursed under a similar
7 Federal child care nutrition program.

8 “(e) ACCOUNTABILITY.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Activities carried out under
10 the pilot program shall be subject to strict account-
11 ability requirements—

12 “(A) to ensure program integrity and pro-
13 tect taxpayer investments in child health; and

14 “(B) that include, at a minimum, the mon-
15 itoring, review, and program integrity require-
16 ments of similar Federal child care nutrition
17 programs.

18 “(2) AUDIT REQUIREMENT.—

19 “(A) DEFINITION OF UNRESOLVED AUDIT
20 FINDING.—In this paragraph, the term ‘unre-
21 solved audit finding’, with respect to an audit
22 of the Inspector General of the Department of
23 Agriculture of the pilot program, means a find-
24 ing in a final audit report that an audited orga-
25 nized child care program has been reimbursed

1 for an unauthorized expenditure or otherwise
2 unallowable cost that is not closed or resolved
3 by the date that is 1 year after the date on
4 which the final audit report is issued.

5 “(B) AUDITS.—

6 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with
7 the first fiscal year beginning after the
8 date of enactment of the Child Care Inno-
9 vation Advancement Act of 2026, and in
10 each fiscal year thereafter, the Inspector
11 General of the Department of Agriculture
12 shall conduct audits of organized child care
13 programs under the pilot program to pre-
14 vent waste, fraud, and abuse of funds by
15 those organized child care programs.

16 “(ii) NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS AU-
17 DITED.—The Inspector General of the De-
18 partment of Agriculture shall determine
19 the appropriate number of organized child
20 care programs to be audited each year
21 under clause (i).

22 “(C) MANDATORY EXCLUSION.—An orga-
23 nized child care program that is found to have
24 an unresolved audit finding shall not be eligible
25 to receive funds under the pilot program during

1 the first 2 fiscal years beginning after the end
 2 of the applicable 1-year period described in sub-
 3 paragraph (A).

4 “(3) ANNUAL CERTIFICATION.—During the
 5 first fiscal year described in paragraph (2)(B)(i),
 6 and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit
 7 to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
 8 Forestry and the Committee on Appropriations of
 9 the Senate and the Committee on Agriculture and
 10 the Committee on Appropriations of the House of
 11 Representatives a certification—

12 “(A) indicating whether—

13 “(i) all audits conducted by the In-
 14 spector General of the Department of Agri-
 15 culture under paragraph (2)(B) have been
 16 completed and reviewed by the appropriate
 17 Assistant Secretary; and

18 “(ii) all organized child care programs
 19 required to be excluded under paragraph
 20 (2)(C) have been so excluded; and

21 “(B) that includes a list of any organized
 22 child care programs excluded under paragraph
 23 (2)(C) from the preceding fiscal year.

24 “(f) PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE REIMBURSE-
 25 MENTS.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Prior to awarding a reim-
2 bursement to an organized child care program under
3 the pilot program, the Secretary shall compare that
4 intended reimbursement with any other reimburse-
5 ment awarded by the Secretary to the organized
6 child care program under another program but for
7 a similar purpose.

8 “(2) REPORT.—If the Secretary awards to an
9 organized child care program reimbursements under
10 the pilot program and another program administered
11 by the Secretary for a similar purpose, the Secretary
12 shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutri-
13 tion, and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee
14 on Agriculture of the House of Representatives a re-
15 port that includes—

16 “(A) a list of all such reimbursements
17 awarded, including the total dollar amount of
18 those reimbursements; and

19 “(B) the justification for awarding mul-
20 tiple reimbursements for a similar purpose to
21 the same organized child care program.

22 “(g) EVALUATION AND REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
24 the termination date of the pilot program under sub-
25 section (h), the Secretary shall conduct, and submit

1 to Congress the results of, an evaluation of the pilot
2 program, which shall contain, at a minimum—

3 “(A) the extent to which, as a result of the
4 pilot program—

5 “(i) additional low-income children
6 were provided nutritious meals; and

7 “(ii) additional children received child
8 care;

9 “(B) a description of procedures necessary
10 to ensure program integrity;

11 “(C) a discussion of the outreach methods
12 that were most effective; and

13 “(D) recommendations regarding perma-
14 nent authority for family or group day cares to
15 receive reimbursement for the purchase of nu-
16 tritious foods for meals provided to children
17 under their care.

18 “(h) TERMINATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot
19 program shall terminate on the date that is 5 years after
20 the date of establishment of the pilot program.

21 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
22 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
23 essary to carry out this section.”.

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