

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To authorize a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BOOKER (for himself and Mr. BRAUN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To authorize a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health, 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 “White House Con-
5 ference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

8 (1) hunger and food and nutrition insecurity
9 are conditions that can be solved;

1 (2) access to healthy food and good nutrition
2 should be a fundamental priority of each individual
3 who lives in a State;

4 (3) more than 50 years have passed since the
5 United States convened a White House conference to
6 comprehensively address the issues of food, hunger,
7 health, and nutrition in the United States;

8 (4) more than 38,000,000 individuals live in
9 households that face hunger insecurity, 12,600,000
10 of whom are children and 5,000,000 of whom are
11 seniors and persons with disabilities or critical ill-
12 nesses;

13 (5)(A) because of the COVID–19 pandemic,
14 more than 42,000,000 individuals, including
15 13,000,000 children, are projected to experience
16 food insecurity; and

17 (B) diet-related diseases greatly worsen out-
18 comes from COVID–19, contributing to nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of
19 all COVID–19 hospitalizations in the United States;

20 (6)(A) the COVID–19 pandemic has disrupted
21 global and local food supply chains, identifying the
22 fragility and importance of the food system as a na-
23 tional security issue and making clear that a diverse
24 local and regional food system is essential to the re-
25 silience of the United States; and

1 (B) that issue has become entangled with the
2 issues of hunger and food and nutrition insecurity;

3 (7)(A) the burdens of food insecurity are not
4 distributed equally, as the burdens remain higher
5 among racial and ethnic minority groups, in rural
6 areas, and in the south and southeast;

7 (B) households headed by Blacks and Hispanics
8 face higher rates of food insecurity, at a rate of 21.2
9 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively, while the na-
10 tional average is 11.1 percent; and

11 (C) the geographic distributions of food insecu-
12 rity remain a serious concern, as rural communities
13 represent 87 percent of the counties in the United
14 States with the highest rates of overall food insecu-
15 rity;

16 (8)(A) nutrition insecurity and diet-related
17 chronic diseases disproportionately affect racial and
18 ethnic minority groups and low-income, rural, and
19 other underserved populations in the United States;
20 and

21 (B) in just over 10 years, type 2 diabetes rates
22 have doubled for African American children and in-
23 creased 50 percent for Native American children and
24 Hispanic children between 10 and 19 years old;

1 (9) conservative cost estimates show that the
2 true cost of hunger and illness related to hunger and
3 food and nutrition insecurity in the United States is
4 at least \$160,000,000,000 per year with respect to
5 direct medical costs, most of which is paid by Medi-
6 care and Medicaid, an amount that exceeds the an-
7 nual budget of the Department of Agriculture;

8 (10) hyper-consolidation in the food industry
9 has led to a dramatic decline in the farmer's share
10 of the food dollar, fewer choices for consumers, and
11 economic insecurity for rural communities, many of
12 which are now considered food deserts;

13 (11)(A) better food and nutrition can save the
14 United States billions of dollars in health care costs
15 by preventing or delaying the progression to late-
16 stage disease for tens of millions of individuals who
17 live in a State and have chronic diseases;

18 (B) the adverse social, physical, and psycho-
19 logical outcomes associated with food and nutrition
20 insecurity are well documented, particularly in
21 households with children, including higher rates of
22 diabetes and hypertension, self-reported fair or poor
23 health, maternal depression, behavioral problems
24 and developmental delays in early life, and poor aca-
25 demic achievement;

1 (C) those outcomes are not only detrimental to
2 the health and well-being of individual children and
3 families, but also negatively impact broader society;
4 and

5 (D) based on a combination of lower worker
6 productivity, higher costs of public education, great-
7 er health care costs, and the cost associated with
8 emergency food distribution, the economic burden
9 associated with food insecurity has been estimated to
10 be over \$178,930,000,000 annually; and

11 (12) a national discussion of the root causes
12 and social determinants of hunger and food and nu-
13 trition insecurity, as well as identification of solu-
14 tions to those epidemics, can lead to action to imple-
15 ment those solutions and to end hunger in the
16 United States.

17 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this Act:

19 (1) CO-CHAIRS.—The term “Co-chairs”
20 means—

21 (A) the Secretary of Health and Human
22 Services;

23 (B) the Secretary of Agriculture; and

24 (C) the Secretary of the Treasury.

1 (2) CONFERENCE.—The term “Conference”
2 means the White House Conference on Food, Nutri-
3 tion, Hunger, and Health convened under section
4 4(a).

5 (3) POLICY COMMITTEE.—The term “Policy
6 Committee” means the Policy Committee established
7 under section 5(a).

8 (4) PRESIDENTIAL DESIGNEE.—The term
9 “Presidential Designee” means the Presidential Des-
10 ignee selected by the President under section 4(b).

11 (5) STATE.—The term “State” means—

12 (A) any of the several States;

13 (B) the District of Columbia;

14 (C) the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

15 (D) Guam;

16 (E) American Samoa;

17 (F) the United States Virgin Islands; and

18 (G) the Commonwealth of the Northern

19 Mariana Islands.

20 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE.**

21 (a) AUTHORITY TO CALL CONFERENCE.—The Presi-
22 dent shall call the White House Conference on Food, Nu-
23 trition, Hunger, and Health, to be convened by the Co-
24 chairs not later than 18 months after the selection of the

1 members of the Policy Committee in accordance with sec-
2 tion 5(a)—

3 (1) to make fundamental policy recommenda-
4 tions with respect to ending hunger, improving nu-
5 trition, making the food system more resilient, and
6 creating sustainable markets for farmers and ranch-
7 ers in the United States; and

8 (2) to implement the purposes described in sub-
9 section (d) and improve Federal food and nutrition
10 assistance programs.

11 (b) SELECTION OF A PRESIDENTIAL DESIGNEE.—
12 The President shall select a senior executive branch offi-
13 cial to serve as Presidential Designee.

14 (c) PLANNING AND DIRECTION.—The Co-chairs, in
15 consultation with the Presidential Designee, shall plan,
16 conduct, and convene the Conference.

17 (d) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Conference
18 are—

19 (1) to identify the impacts of the COVID–19
20 pandemic on the state of food and nutrition insecu-
21 rity;

22 (2) to identify areas of weakness within the
23 food system of the United States;

1 (3) to explore the impact of racial, urban, rural,
2 and geographic disparities on hunger and food and
3 nutrition insecurity;

4 (4) to identify viable solutions for—

5 (A) ending hunger in the United States by
6 2030;

7 (B) reducing by $\frac{1}{2}$ the level of nutrition
8 insecurity by 2025; and

9 (C) reducing by $\frac{1}{2}$ the level of diet-related
10 illnesses by 2030;

11 (5) to identify any changes and trends with re-
12 spect to food and nutrition-related security, health,
13 and healthcare spending for the 30 years prior to
14 the date of enactment of this Act;

15 (6) to review the structure, scope, and effective-
16 ness of existing laws, regulations, or programs—

17 (A) at the Federal, State, and local levels
18 that provide for the nutritional needs of food-
19 insecure individuals who live in a State; and

20 (B) across all Federal departments and
21 agencies that carry out activities related to food
22 and nutrition;

23 (7) to identify possible duplication among Fed-
24 eral food and nutrition programs and to recommend
25 streamlining opportunities in order to improve nutri-

1 tional and food security outcomes in the United
2 States;

3 (8) to determine the extent to which current
4 Federal, State, and local programs can help improve
5 the nutritional health of individuals who live in a
6 State to better use available resources and ensure
7 greater coordination among those programs;

8 (9) to identify the ways in which healthcare sys-
9 tems can best integrate and incorporate food and
10 nutrition interventions to improve health, end hun-
11 ger, and reduce by $\frac{1}{2}$ the levels of nutrition insecu-
12 rity and diet-related illnesses in the United States;

13 (10) to identify ways to provide opportunities
14 for independent family farmers and ranchers to meet
15 the nutritional needs of every individual who lives in
16 a State;

17 (11) to highlight emerging and innovative pro-
18 grams from the public and private sectors, including
19 community-based and faith-based organizations that
20 effectively address the nutrition needs of vulnerable
21 individuals who live in a State;

22 (12) to identify opportunities for effective part-
23 nerships between the government, private industry,
24 labor, healthcare, independent family farmers, and

1 nonprofit sectors to fight hunger in the United
2 States;

3 (13) to bring public attention to the more than
4 38,000,000 individuals who live in a State that face
5 a constant struggle against hunger, food insecurity,
6 and nutrition insecurity;

7 (14) to review—

8 (A) the medical, developmental, and edu-
9 cational impact of hunger, food insecurity, and
10 nutrition insecurity;

11 (B) the potential savings to the United
12 States health care system, educational system,
13 and other sectors when appropriate food is
14 available to the critically and chronically ill; and

15 (C) the economic opportunities for inde-
16 pendent farmers and ranchers to provide
17 healthy food to their communities; and

18 (15) to build understanding among individuals
19 who live in a State—

20 (A) of the cost of hunger and nutrition in-
21 security in the United States, including lost
22 wages, diminished stamina, and reduced capac-
23 ity to learn; and

24 (B) that hunger, malnutrition, and food
25 and nutrition insecurity, in addition to an in-

1 creasingly consolidated and foreign-owned food
2 and farm supply system, is a matter of national
3 security.

4 **SEC. 5. POLICY COMMITTEE AND RELATED COMMITTEES.**

5 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than June 30,
6 2022, the Co-chairs shall establish a Policy Committee
7 composed of 25 members to be appointed as follows:

8 (1) PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES.—13 members
9 shall be appointed by the President and shall in-
10 clude—

11 (A) the Presidential Designee;

12 (B) 2 members who are officers or employ-
13 ees of the United States;

14 (C) 2 members who are representatives of
15 the healthcare system;

16 (D) 2 members who are farmers or ranch-
17 ers; and

18 (E) 6 members with experience in address-
19 ing the needs of food-insecure and nutrition-in-
20 secure individuals who live in a State.

21 (2) SENATE APPOINTEES.—

22 (A) 3 members shall be appointed by the
23 majority leader of the Senate, in consultation
24 with—

12

1 (i) the chairperson and ranking mem-
2 ber of the Committee on Health, Edu-
3 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

4 (ii) the chairperson and ranking mem-
5 ber of the Committee on Agriculture, Nu-
6 trition, and Forestry of the Senate; and

7 (iii) the chairperson and ranking
8 member of the Committee on Finance of
9 the Senate.

10 (B) 3 members shall be appointed by the
11 minority leader of the Senate, in consultation
12 with the members of the committees described
13 in clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph
14 (A).

15 (3) HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AP-
16 PPOINTEES.—

17 (A) 3 members shall be appointed by the
18 Speaker of the House of Representatives, in
19 consultation with—

20 (i) the chairperson and ranking mem-
21 ber of the Committee on Education and
22 Labor of the House of Representatives;

23 (ii) the chairperson and ranking mem-
24 ber of the Committee on Agriculture of the
25 House of Representatives; and

1 (iii) the chairperson and ranking
2 member of the Committee on Ways and
3 Means of the House of Representatives.

4 (B) 3 members shall be appointed by the
5 minority leader of the House of Representa-
6 tives, in consultation with the members of the
7 committees described in clauses (i), (ii), and
8 (iii) of subparagraph (A).

9 (b) OPERATION OF COMMITTEE.—

10 (1) CHAIRPERSON.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Presidential Des-
12 ignee shall serve as the chairperson of the Pol-
13 icy Committee.

14 (B) VOTING PRIVILEGE.—The chairperson
15 may vote only to break a tie vote of the other
16 members of the Policy Committee.

17 (2) VOTING.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Policy Committee
19 shall act by the vote of a majority of the mem-
20 bers present.

21 (B) QUORUM.—A quorum of members
22 shall not be required to conduct Policy Com-
23 mittee business.

24 (c) DUTIES OF THE COMMITTEE.—

25 (1) MEETINGS.—

1 (A) INITIAL MEETING.—The Co-chairs of
2 the Conference shall hold the first meeting of
3 the Policy Committee not later than 30 days
4 after the last member is appointed to the Com-
5 mittee in accordance with subsection (a).

6 (B) REGULAR MEETINGS.—Subsequent
7 meetings of the Policy Committee shall be held
8 at the call of the Co-chairs of the Conference.

9 (2) DUTIES.—Through meetings, hearings, and
10 working sessions, the Policy Committee shall—

11 (A) make recommendations to the Co-
12 chairs to facilitate the timely convening of the
13 Conference;

14 (B) not later than 90 days after the first
15 meeting of the Policy Committee, prepare and
16 submit to the Co-chairs a proposed agenda for
17 the Conference that reflects, to the greatest ex-
18 tent practicable—

19 (i) the major issues facing the field of
20 food and nutrition; and

21 (ii) the purposes of the Conference de-
22 scribed in section 4(d);

23 (C) make recommendations with respect to
24 the selection of the delegates to the Conference;

1 (D) establish the number of delegates to be
2 selected under section 6; and

3 (E) establish an executive committee
4 that—

5 (i) consists of 3 members of the Policy
6 Committee, selected in consultation with
7 the Committee on Agriculture of the House
8 of Representatives, the Committee on
9 Rules of the House of Representatives, and
10 the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
11 and Forestry of the Senate; and

12 (ii) collaborates with the delegates to
13 the Conference.

14 **SEC. 6. CONFERENCE DELEGATES.**

15 To carry out the purposes of the Conference de-
16 scribed in section 4(d), the Co-chairs shall appoint dele-
17 gates who are representative of the spectrum of thought
18 in the field of food and nutrition, without regard to polit-
19 ical affiliation or past partisan activity, who shall in-
20 clude—

21 (1) representatives of Federal, State, and local
22 governments;

23 (2) individuals working in the field of food,
24 health, nutrition, farming, and economic security;
25 and

1 (3) members of the general public who are af-
2 fected by hunger and nutrition insecurity in the
3 United States.

4 **SEC. 7. CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION.**

5 (a) ADMINISTRATION.—In administering this Act,
6 the Co-chairs shall—

7 (1) not later than 48 hours before the start of
8 a meeting, hearing, or working session, provide writ-
9 ten notice to all members of the Policy Committee
10 of that meeting, hearing, or working session;

11 (2) request the cooperation and assistance of
12 the heads of Federal departments and agencies as
13 may be appropriate, including the detailing of per-
14 sonnel from those departments and agencies;

15 (3) make available for public comment the pro-
16 posed agenda submitted by the Policy Committee
17 under section 5(c)(2)(B);

18 (4) not later than 30 days after the date on
19 which the proposed agenda is submitted for public
20 comment under paragraph (3), approve that agenda;
21 and

22 (5) prepare and make available to delegates
23 background materials determined by the Co-chairs
24 to be necessary.

1 (b) NO COMPENSATION.—All members appointed
2 under this Act shall serve in the roles for which they are
3 appointed without compensation.

4 (c) DUTIES.—The Co-chairs shall ensure that—

5 (1) the proposed agenda prepared under section
6 5(c)(2)(B) is published in the Federal Register not
7 later than 30 days after that agenda is approved
8 under subsection (a)(4);

9 (2) any employed personnel are fairly balanced
10 with respect to points of views represented and are
11 appointed without regard to political affiliation or
12 previous partisan activities;

13 (3) the recommendations of the Conference—

14 (A) are not inappropriately influenced by
15 any special interest; and

16 (B) are the result of the independent and
17 collective judgment of the delegates to the Con-
18 ference; and

19 (4) not later than 30 days before the Con-
20 ference is convened, the delegates to the Conference
21 have access to information provided by relevant Fed-
22 eral agencies that includes—

23 (A) updated statistical data (including de-
24 cennial census data) and other information on
25 food and nutrition in the United States; and

1 (B) information necessary to evaluate Fed-
2 eral programs and policies relating to food and
3 nutrition.

4 (d) GIFTS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Co-chairs may accept,
6 on behalf of the United States, gifts (in cash or in
7 kind, including voluntary and uncompensated serv-
8 ices), which shall be available to carry out this Act.

9 (2) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.—Gifts of cash shall
10 be available in addition to amounts appropriated to
11 carry out this Act.

12 (e) RECORDS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Co-chairs shall main-
14 tain records regarding—

15 (A) the sources, amounts, and uses of gifts
16 accepted under subsection (d); and

17 (B) the identity of each individual assisting
18 in carrying out this Act, and the amount of
19 compensation, if any, received by each such in-
20 dividual.

21 (2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—For each gift ac-
22 cepted under subsection (d), the records described in
23 paragraph (1) shall be made public not later than 30
24 days after the date on which the gift is received.

1 **SEC. 8. CONFERENCE REPORT.**

2 (a) PRELIMINARY REPORT.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 100 days
4 after the date on which the Conference adjourns, the
5 Policy Committee shall prepare a preliminary report
6 on the Conference, which shall be—

7 (A) published in the Federal Register; and

8 (B) submitted to the chief executive offi-
9 cers of each of the States.

10 (2) VIEWS AND FINDINGS.—The Policy Com-
11 mittee shall request that, not later than 45 days
12 after the submission of the report by the Policy
13 Committee under paragraph (1)(B), the chief execu-
14 tive officers of each of the States shall submit to the
15 Policy Committee views and findings with respect to
16 that report.

17 (b) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after
18 the date on which the Conference adjourns, the Policy
19 Committee shall—

20 (1) prepare a final report on the Conference,
21 which shall include—

22 (A) a compilation of the views and findings
23 of the chief executive officers of each of the
24 States submitted under subsection (a)(2); and

1 (B) recommendations for administrative
2 action and legislation with respect to those
3 views and findings; and

4 (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-
5 mit to the President and to Congress, the rec-
6 ommendations described in paragraph (1)(B).

7 **SEC. 9. STATUS REPORTS.**

8 (a) INITIAL STATUS REPORT.—Not later than 2
9 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns,
10 the Presidential Designee shall—

11 (1) prepare a status report documenting the im-
12 plementation of the recommendations contained in
13 the final report described in section 8(b)(1)(B); and

14 (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-
15 mit to the President and to Congress, that status re-
16 port.

17 (b) SUBSEQUENT STATUS REPORTS.—Not later than
18 5 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns,
19 and every 2 years thereafter for not longer than 10 years,
20 the Presidential Designee shall—

21 (1) prepare a status report documenting the im-
22 plementation of the recommendations contained in
23 that final report; and

1 (2) publish in the Federal Register, and trans-
2 mit to the President and to Congress, that status re-
3 port.

4 **SEC. 10. COMMITTEE HEARINGS.**

5 (a) HEARINGS ON REPORTS.—The Committee on Ag-
6 riculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Com-
7 mittee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives,
8 and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representa-
9 tives shall each hold hearings on the recommendations and
10 status reports transmitted to Congress under sections
11 8(b)(2), 9(a)(2), and 9(b)(2).

12 (b) HEARINGS ON STATUS OF HUNGER, NUTRITION
13 SECURITY, AND FOOD SYSTEMS.—The Committee on Ag-
14 riculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Com-
15 mittee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives,
16 and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representa-
17 tives shall each hold annual hearings on the status of hun-
18 ger, food and nutrition insecurity, and resilient food sys-
19 tems in the United States.

20 (c) EXERCISE OF RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.—Sub-
21 sections (a) and (b) are enacted—

22 (1) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of
23 the Senate and the House of Representatives, and,
24 as such, shall be considered as part of the rules of
25 the Senate or the House of Representatives (as the

1 case may be), and such rules shall supersede any
2 other rule of the Senate or the House of Representa-
3 tives only to the extent that any such rule is incon-
4 sistent therewith; and

5 (2) with full recognition of the constitutional
6 right of either House to change such rules (so far
7 as relating to the procedure in such House) at any
8 time, in the same manner, and to the same extent
9 as in the case of any other rule of the Senate or the
10 House of Representatives.

11 **SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

12 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be
14 appropriated \$2,500,000 to carry out this Act for
15 each of—

16 (A) the fiscal year in which the Policy
17 Committee plans the Conference and for the
18 following fiscal year; and

19 (B) the fiscal year in which the Conference
20 is held.

21 (2) LIMITATION.—Any new spending authority
22 or new authority to enter into contracts under this
23 Act, and under which the United States is obligated
24 to make outlays, shall be effective only to the extent,

1 and in such amounts, as are provided in advance in
2 appropriation Acts.

3 (b) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Funds appropriated to carry
5 out this Act and funds received as gifts under sec-
6 tion 7(d) shall remain available for obligation or ex-
7 penditure for 1 year after the date on which the
8 Conference adjourns.

9 (2) UNOBLIGATED FUNDS.—Any funds de-
10 scribed in paragraph (1) that are not expended or
11 obligated before the expiration of the 1-year period
12 described in that paragraph shall be returned to the
13 United States Treasury.