

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 27

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Urges US Congress to pass legislation allowing a regional income eligibility requirement for school nutrition programs.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



SJR27 RUIZ

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1 **A JOINT RESOLUTION** respectfully urging the United States
2 Congress to pass legislation increasing access to school nutrition
3 programs.

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5 **WHEREAS**, More than 12 million American children live in
6 households that experience a limited availability of food at some
7 point during the year; and

8 **WHEREAS**, School nutrition programs administered by the United
9 States Department of Agriculture, like the School Breakfast
10 Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP),
11 provide accessible meals to millions of children in need; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Programs like SBP and NSLP provide an opportunity for
13 children to eat healthy and nutritious meals, with some estimates
14 showing a 29 percent reduction in poor health among children who
15 participate in these programs; and

16 **WHEREAS**, Although these programs are limited to children living in
17 households that earn at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty
18 guideline, which is \$47,637 for a family of four, approximately 7.2
19 percent of all households earning above this requirement have
20 difficulty meeting basic food needs; and

21 **WHEREAS**, Eligibility for school nutrition programs are based on a
22 poverty guideline that fails to consider variation in the cost of
23 living; and

24 **WHEREAS**, Many households with income above \$47,637 struggle to
25 cover basic expenses like food due to the high cost of living in
26 various states, with a family of four in New Jersey needing \$74,748
27 respectively to cover basic living expenses; and

28 **WHEREAS**, Children living in households that have difficulty meeting
29 basic food needs have a higher likelihood of anxiety and depression
30 and show slower progress in mastering math and reading; now,
31 therefore,

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33 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
34 *State of New Jersey:*

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36 1. The Governor and the Legislature of New Jersey respectfully
37 urge the United States Congress to pass legislation broadening
38 access to school nutrition programs by creating a regional income
39 eligibility requirement that considers variation in a state's cost of
40 living when determining a child's acceptance into a school nutrition
41 program.

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43 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
44 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the
45 Secretary of the Senate to the Majority and Minority Leaders of the
46 United States Senate, the Speaker and Majority and Minority
47 Leaders of the United States House of Representatives, and each
48 member of the United States Congress elected from this State.

1 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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6 This resolution respectfully urges the United States Congress to
7 pass legislation broadening access to school nutrition programs by
8 creating a regional income eligibility requirement that considers
9 variation in a state's cost of living.

10 Currently, children can participate in various school nutrition
11 programs if the child lives in a household that earns at or below 185
12 percent of the federal poverty guideline. This income requirement,
13 which equates to \$47,637 for a family of four, is a national
14 requirement that does not take into account variation in a state's
15 cost of living.

16 As a result of this income requirement, families living above the
17 185 percent guideline but below their state's average cost of living
18 have to balance additional food costs along with limited resources.
19 This creates a situation where children are potentially left without
20 adequate daily nutrition. Legislation creating a regional income
21 eligibility requirement eliminates this issue by accounting for the
22 cost of living variation, allowing struggling families living in
23 expensive states the opportunity to apply for school nutrition
24 programs for their children.