

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To create a new Federal grant program that provides grants to State libraries to allow schools with summer lunch programs to keep their libraries open for student use during the summer months.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MERKLEY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To create a new Federal grant program that provides grants to State libraries to allow schools with summer lunch programs to keep their libraries open for student use during the summer months.

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 “Summer Meals and
5 Learning Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) ELIGIBLE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—

2 The term “eligible local educational agency” means
3 a local educational agency, as defined in section
4 8101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education
5 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801)—

6 (A) that serves lunch at a school served by
7 the local educational agency during the summer
8 as part of—

9 (i) the summer food service program
10 for children established under section 13 of
11 the Richard B. Russell National School
12 Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1761); or

13 (ii) the seamless summer option au-
14 thorized by section 13(a)(8) of such Act
15 (42 U.S.C. 1761(a)(8)); and

16 (B) where at least 50 percent of the stu-
17 dents in grades prekindergarten through grade
18 3 at such school—

19 (i) are reading below grade level at
20 grade 3; or

21 (ii) are at risk of reading below grade
22 level at grade 3.

23 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
24 the Secretary of Education.

(3) STATE.—The term “State” means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands.

(4) STATE LIBRARY ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY.—The term “State library administrative agency” has the meaning given the term in section 213 of the Museum and Library Services Act (20 U.S.C. 9122).

(5) SUMMER EARLY READING PROGRAM.—The term “summer early reading program” means a program held in the summer, and not less than 6 weeks in duration, that—

16 (A) is held at a school with a summer
17 lunch site described in paragraph (1)(A); and

18 (B) provides students participating in the
19 lunch program—

20 (i) access to the school library; and

(ii) literacy activities or expanded learning opportunities at the school.

1 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR SUMMER EARLY READING PROGRAMS**
2 **AT SUMMER MEAL SITES.**

3 (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From amounts made
4 available under subsection (f) for a fiscal year, the Sec-
5 retary shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to State
6 library administrative agencies to enable the State library
7 administrative agencies to award subgrants to eligible
8 local educational agencies for summer early reading pro-
9 grams.

10 (b) APPLICATIONS.—A State library administrative
11 agency desiring a grant under this section shall submit
12 an application at such time, in such manner, and con-
13 taining such information as the Secretary may require.
14 Each application shall include—

15 (1) how the State library administrative agency
16 will award subgrants described in subsection (d), in-
17 cluding any priorities or considerations that the
18 State library administrative agency will apply in
19 making such awards, with an emphasis toward sup-
20 porting eligible local educational agencies with a dis-
21 proportionately high ratio of students served at
22 school lunch sites described in section 2(1)(A) to
23 such school lunch sites;

24 (2) how the State library administrative agency
25 will disseminate, in a timely manner, information re-
26 garding the subgrants described in subsection (d)

1 and the application process for such subgrants to eli-
2 gible local educational agencies;

3 (3) the criteria that the State library adminis-
4 trative agency will require for the summer early
5 reading programs, including the minimum number
6 of hours that the school library shall remain acces-
7 sible and any other criteria regarding the activities
8 to be offered; and

9 (4) an assurance from the State library admin-
10 istrative agency that each eligible local educational
11 agency that receives a subgrant will provide a sum-
12 mer early reading program at each school lunch site
13 served by the local educational agency.

14 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—A State library administrative
15 agency receiving a grant under this section shall use grant
16 funds to award subgrants to eligible local educational
17 agencies under subsection (d).

18 (d) SUBGRANTS.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each State library adminis-
20 trative agency receiving a grant under this section
21 shall award subgrants, on a competitive basis, to eli-
22 gible local educational agencies to enable the eligible
23 local educational agencies to provide summer early
24 reading programs.

1 (2) APPLICATIONS.—An eligible local edu-
2 cational agency desiring a subgrant under this sec-
3 tion shall submit an application at such time, in
4 such manner, and containing such information as
5 the State library administrative agency may require.
6 Each application shall include—

7 (A) a description of the school lunch sites
8 described in section 2(1)(A) that will be partici-
9 pating in the summer early reading program,
10 and the ratio, as of the date of application, of
11 the number of students served to the number of
12 such school lunch sites;

13 (B) proof that the eligible local educational
14 agency meets the requirements of section 2(1);

15 (C) a description of the summer early
16 reading program that the eligible local edu-
17 cational agency will provide at each school
18 lunch site to be served; and

19 (D) a description of how community part-
20 ners will be involved in the summer early read-
21 ing program.

22 (3) AWARD BASIS.—A State library administra-
23 tive agency receiving a grant under this section shall
24 award subgrants based on—

1 (A) the proposed number of school lunch
2 sites and the number of students that will be
3 served under the summer early reading pro-
4 gram; and

5 (B) any other criteria established by the
6 State library administrative agency in the appli-
7 cation submitted under subsection (b).

8 (4) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible local edu-
9 cational agency receiving a subgrant under this sub-
10 section shall use the subgrant funds to work with
11 community partners to—

12 (A) develop and implement the summer
13 early reading programs proposed in the applica-
14 tion submitted under paragraph (2);

15 (B) develop and carry out other activities
16 and strategies related to such summer early
17 reading programs; and

18 (C) hire and train appropriate State li-
19 brary administrative agency personnel to teach
20 the summer early reading programs during the
21 summer.

22 (e) REPORTS.—For each year of a grant or subgrant
23 awarded under this section, a State library administrative
24 agency receiving such grant, or an eligible local edu-
25 cational agency receiving such subgrant, shall submit a re-

1 port regarding the progress made in achieving the pur-
2 poses of the grant or subgrant, respectively, to the Sec-
3 retary.

4 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
5 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act
6 \$5,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2027 through
7 2031.