**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF CHILD HUNGER ON OUR STATE’S YOUNGEST CITIZENS AND TO ENCOURAGE ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS IN OUR STATE TO MAXIMIZE ACCESS TO HEALTHY MEALS AT NO COST FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY BY ADOPTING THE COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION OF THE HEALTHY, HUNGER‑FREE KIDS ACT.

Whereas, an estimated 253,000 of South Carolina’s children lack consistent access to nutritionally adequate foods due to economic hardship and lack of resources; and

Whereas, according to U.S. Census data, rates of poverty and food insecurity among both children and households in South Carolina are on the rise; and

Whereas, children living with food insecurity are at a significantly greater risk for illness, nutrient deficiency, delayed development, obesity, behavioral problems, and educational challenges; and

Whereas, child hunger and malnutrition in South Carolina strain our state’s financial and medical resources, act as barriers to the growth of healthy communities, and threaten our investments in education; and

Whereas, increasing participation in the federal school nutrition programs provides an effective, consistent, and cost‑efficient means for reducing child hunger in South Carolina; and

Whereas, families struggling to put food on the table need and deserve the support of their own communities and the entire State of South Carolina; and

Whereas, the Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger‑Free Kids Act of 2010 provides local educational agencies and schools in low‑income areas with an alternative approach for operating school meal programs; and

Whereas, this provision is an option that allows schools with high percentages of low‑income children to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, essentially becoming hunger‑free schools; and

Whereas fifty‑one percent of eligible schools in the State already participate in Community Eligibility and are serving all students two healthy meals per day; and

Whereas, child hunger is a social, political, and public health issue that requires the attention of South Carolina’s leaders; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives finds it to be in the best interest of South Carolina schools to maximize the participation in federal school nutrition programs and for the State of South Carolina to support greater accessibility to these programs and expansion of the services they offer; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives encourages school districts with schools or groupings of schools eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility option that are not doing so to submit an application to the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to apply to implement Community Eligibility and to access the technical assistance available from the State Department of Education Office of Health and Nutrition. Now, therefore:

Be it enacted by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize the devastating impact of child hunger on our State’s youngest citizens and encourage eligible schools in our State to maximize access to healthy meals at no cost for children in poverty by adopting the Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger‑Free Kids Act of 2010.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Superintendent Molly Spearman at the State Department of Education.

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