

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To authorize the Secretary of Defense to conduct a pilot program to provide coupons to junior enlisted members to purchase food at commissaries.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Defense to conduct a pilot program to provide coupons to junior enlisted members to purchase food at commissaries.

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 “Commissary Healthy
5 Options and servicemember Welfare (CHOW) Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE COUPONS TO JUNIOR**
2 **ENLISTED MEMBERS TO PURCHASE FOOD AT**
3 **COMMISSARIES.**

4 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
5 gress that—

6 (1) members of the Armed Forces and their
7 families deserve access to affordable and healthy
8 food options, including during their duty day;

9 (2) there has been increased awareness about
10 the challenges members and their families face in ac-
11 cessing affordable and healthy food options;

12 (3) those challenges have been especially acute
13 for unaccompanied junior enlisted members who live
14 in government-provided quarters on military installa-
15 tions; and

16 (4) the Department of Defense should explore
17 a variety of proposals for expanding the accessibility
18 of healthy and affordable food options to members,
19 especially members who live in unaccompanied hous-
20 ing on military installations.

21 (b) PILOT PROGRAM.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense
23 may conduct a pilot program to assess the efficacy
24 of providing junior enlisted members of the Armed
25 Forces a monthly coupon for use in procuring food
26 at commissaries.

1 (2) SELECTION OF INSTALLATIONS.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
3 conduct the pilot program authorized by para-
4 graph (1) at 2 military installations.

5 (B) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting instal-
6 lations for the pilot program authorized by
7 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider in-
8 stallations with—

9 (i) large numbers of enlisted members
10 who live in unaccompanied housing;

11 (ii) the largest ratios of enlisted mem-
12 bers to commissioned officers;

13 (iii) unaccompanied housing that pro-
14 vides access to functioning kitchens that
15 residents may use to prepare meals;

16 (iv) commissaries that are experi-
17 menting with or expanding their selection
18 of nutritious and minimally processed
19 ready-made and easy-to-make food options;

20 (v) low rates of attendance at dining
21 facilities;

22 (vi) low customer satisfaction ratings
23 for dining facilities, including installations
24 with complaints about dining facilities sub-
25 mitted through the Interactive Customer

1 Evaluation system of the Department of
2 Defense; and

3 (vii) commissaries located within eas-
4 ily accessible distances from unaccom-
5 panied housing.

6 (3) COUPONS.—

7 (A) AMOUNT.—The Secretary may deter-
8 mine the amount of the coupons to be provided
9 under the pilot program authorized by para-
10 graph (1).

11 (B) USE.—

12 (i) IN GENERAL.—A coupon provided
13 under the pilot program authorized by
14 paragraph (1) may be used only to pur-
15 chase food at commissaries.

16 (ii) EXCLUSIONS.—A coupon provided
17 under the pilot program authorized by
18 paragraph (1) may not be used—

19 (I) to purchase alcoholic bev-
20 erages or tobacco; or

21 (II) to pay any deposit fee in ex-
22 cess of the amount of the State fee re-
23 imbursement (if any) required to pur-
24 chase any food or food product con-
25 tained in a returnable bottle or can,

1 without regard to whether the fee is
2 included in the shelf price posted for
3 the food or food product.

4 (C) SUPPLEMENT TO OTHER FOOD ASSIST-
5 ANCE.—A coupon provided to a member under
6 the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1)
7 shall be supplement and not supplant—

8 (i) the basic allowance for subsistence
9 under section 402 of title 37, United
10 States Code; and

11 (ii) any program to provide meals or
12 rations in kind for which the member is el-
13 igible.

14 (4) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot
15 program authorized by paragraph (1) shall termi-
16 nate not later than one year after the pilot program
17 commences.

18 (5) REPORT REQUIRED.—

19 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days
20 after the termination under paragraph (4) of
21 the pilot program authorized by paragraph (1),
22 the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the
23 congressional defense committees a report de-
24 tailing the results of the pilot program.

1 (B) ELEMENTS.—The report required by
2 subparagraph (A) shall include an assessment
3 of the following:

4 (i) The use of coupons by members
5 who received coupons under the pilot pro-
6 gram.

7 (ii) The satisfaction of and feedback
8 from such members relating to the cou-
9 pons.

10 (iii) The impact of providing the cou-
11 pons on—

12 (I) the rates at which such mem-
13 bers used commissaries; and

14 (II) the rates at which such
15 members used dining facilities on
16 their installations.

17 (iv) Historical rates of use of dining
18 facilities on installations and historical cus-
19 tomer satisfaction metrics for such facili-
20 ties, including the number of complaints
21 with respect to such facilities submitted
22 through the Interactive Customer Evalua-
23 tion system of the Department of Defense.

24 (v) The efficacy of the pilot program
25 in—

1 (I) reducing food insecurity rates
2 among junior enlisted members;

3 (II) increasing the availability of
4 nutritious food options for such mem-
5 bers at commissaries; and

6 (III) increasing the availability of
7 nutritious food options for such mem-
8 bers generally, including such mem-
9 bers living in unaccompanied housing.

10 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

11 (1) CONGRESSIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEES.—
12 The term “congressional defense committees” has
13 the meaning given the term in section 101(a)(16) of
14 title 10, United States Code.

15 (2) COUPON.—The term “coupon” means a
16 voucher or monetary benefit for a member of the
17 Armed Forces that may be used only at a com-
18 missary for the purchase of food.

19 (3) FOOD.—The term “food” means any food
20 or food product intended for home consumption, in-
21 cluding a ready-made food item.