117TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

H. R. ______

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. McGovern introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ____________________

A BILL

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) hunger and food and nutrition insecurity are conditions that can be solved;
(2) access to healthy food and good nutrition should be a fundamental priority of each individual who lives in a State;

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

(4) more than 38,000,000 individuals live in households that face hunger insecurity, 12,600,000 of whom are children and 5,000,000 of whom are seniors and persons with disabilities or critical illnesses;

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

(B) diet-related diseases greatly worsen outcomes from COVID–19, contributing to nearly 2/3 of all COVID–19 hospitalizations in the United States;

(6)(A) the COVID–19 pandemic has disrupted global and local food supply chains, identifying the fragility and importance of the food system as a national security issue and making clear that a diverse local and regional food system is essential to the resilience of the United States; and
(B) that issue has become entangled with the issues of hunger and food and nutrition insecurity;

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

(B) households headed by Blacks and Hispanics face higher rates of food insecurity, at a rate of 21.2 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively, while the national average is 11.1 percent; and

(C) the geographic distributions of food insecurity remain a serious concern, as rural communities represent 87 percent of the counties in the United States with the highest rates of overall food insecurity;

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

(B) in just over 10 years, type 2 diabetes rates have doubled for African American children and increased 50 percent for Native American children and Hispanic children between 10 and 19 years old;
(9) conservative cost estimates show that the true cost of hunger and illness related to hunger and food and nutrition insecurity in the United States is at least $160,000,000,000 per year with respect to direct medical costs, most of which is paid by Medicare and Medicaid, an amount that exceeds the annual budget of the Department of Agriculture;

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

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

(B) the adverse social, physical, and psychological outcomes associated with food and nutrition insecurity are well documented, particularly in households with children, including higher rates of diabetes and hypertension, self-reported fair or poor health, maternal depression, behavioral problems and developmental delays in early life, and poor academic achievement;
(C) those outcomes are not only detrimental to
the health and well-being of individual children and
families, but also negatively impact broader society;
and

(D) based on a combination of lower worker
productivity, higher costs of public education, greater
health care costs, and the cost associated with
emergency food distribution, the economic burden
associated with food insecurity has been estimated to
be over $178,930,000,000 annually; and

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

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) Co-chairs.—The term “Co-chairs”
means—

(A) the Secretary of Health and Human
Services;

(B) the Secretary of Agriculture; and

(C) the Secretary of the Treasury.
(2) CONFERENCE.—The term “Conference” means the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health convened under section 4(a).

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

(4) PRESIDENTIAL DESIGNEE.—The term “Presidential Designee” means the Presidential Designee selected by the President under section 4(b).

(5) STATE.—The term “State” means—

(A) any of the several States;

(B) the District of Columbia;

(C) the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

(D) Guam;

(E) American Samoa;

(F) the United States Virgin Islands; and

(G) the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE.

(a) AUTHORITY TO CALL CONFERENCE.—The President shall call the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health, to be convened by the Co-chairs not later than 18 months after the selection of the
members of the Policy Committee in accordance with section 5(a)—

(1) to make fundamental policy recommendations with respect to ending hunger, improving nutrition, making the food system more resilient, and creating sustainable markets for farmers and ranchers in the United States; and

(2) to implement the purposes described in subsection (d) and improve Federal food and nutrition assistance programs.

(b) Selection of a Presidential Designee.—

The President shall select a senior executive branch official to serve as Presidential Designee.

(c) Planning and Direction.—The Co-chairs, in consultation with the Presidential Designee, shall plan, conduct, and convene the Conference.

(d) Purposes.—The purposes of the Conference are—

(1) to identify the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic on the state of food and nutrition insecurity;

(2) to identify areas of weakness within the food system of the United States;
(3) to explore the impact of racial, urban, rural, and geographic disparities on hunger and food and nutrition insecurity;

(4) to identify viable solutions for—

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

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

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

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

(6) to review the structure, scope, and effectiveness of existing laws, regulations, or programs—

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

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

(7) to identify possible duplication among Federal food and nutrition programs and to recommend streamlining opportunities in order to improve nutri-
9 tional and food security outcomes in the United States;

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

(9) to identify the ways in which healthcare systems can best integrate and incorporate food and nutrition interventions to improve health, end hunger, and reduce by 1/2 the levels of nutrition insecurity and diet-related illnesses in the United States;

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

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

(12) to identify opportunities for effective partnerships between the government, private industry, labor, healthcare, independent family farmers, and
nonprofit sectors to fight hunger in the United States;

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

(14) to review—

(A) the medical, developmental, and educational impact of hunger, food insecurity, and nutrition insecurity;

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

(C) the economic opportunities for independent farmers and ranchers to provide healthy food to their communities; and

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

(A) of the cost of hunger and nutrition insecurity in the United States, including lost wages, diminished stamina, and reduced capacity to learn; and

(B) that hunger, malnutrition, and food and nutrition insecurity, in addition to an in-
creasingly consolidated and foreign-owned food and farm supply system, is a matter of national security.

SEC. 5. POLICY COMMITTEE AND RELATED COMMITTEES.

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

(1) Presidential appointees.—13 members shall be appointed by the President and shall include—

(A) the Presidential Designee;

(B) 2 members who are officers or employees of the United States;

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

(D) 2 members who are farmers or ranchers; and

(E) 6 members with experience in addressing the needs of food-insecure and nutrition-insecure individuals who live in a State.

(2) Senate appointees.—

(A) 3 members shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, in consultation with—
(i) the chairperson and ranking member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

(ii) the chairperson and ranking member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate; and

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

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

(3) House of Representatives Appointees.—

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

(i) the chairperson and ranking member of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives;

(ii) the chairperson and ranking member of the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives; and
(iii) the chairperson and ranking member of the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives.

(B) 3 members shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, in consultation with the members of the committees described in clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A).

(b) Operation of Committee.—

(1) Chairperson.—

(A) In general.—The Presidential Designee shall serve as the chairperson of the Policy Committee.

(B) Voting privilege.—The chairperson may vote only to break a tie vote of the other members of the Policy Committee.

(2) Voting.—

(A) In general.—The Policy Committee shall act by the vote of a majority of the members present.

(B) Quorum.—A quorum of members shall not be required to conduct Policy Committee business.

(c) Duties of the Committee.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

(ii) the purposes of the Conference described in section 4(d);

(C) make recommendations with respect to the selection of the delegates to the Conference;
(D) establish the number of delegates to be selected under section 6; and

(E) establish an executive committee that—

(i) consists of 3 members of the Policy Committee, selected in consultation with the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate; and

(ii) collaborates with the delegates to the Conference.

SEC. 6. CONFERENCE DELEGATES.

To carry out the purposes of the Conference described in section 4(d), the Co-chairs shall appoint delegates who are representative of the spectrum of thought in the field of food and nutrition, without regard to political affiliation or past partisan activity, who shall include—

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

(2) individuals working in the field of food, health, nutrition, farming, and economic security; and
(3) members of the general public who are affected by hunger and nutrition insecurity in the United States.

SEC. 7. CONFERENCE ADMINISTRATION.

(a) Administration.—In administering this Act, the Co-chairs shall—

(1) not later than 48 hours before the start of a meeting, hearing, or working session, provide written notice to all members of the Policy Committee of that meeting, hearing, or working session;

(2) request the cooperation and assistance of the heads of Federal departments and agencies as may be appropriate, including the detailing of personnel from those departments and agencies;

(3) make available for public comment the proposed agenda submitted by the Policy Committee under section 5(c)(2)(B);

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

(5) prepare and make available to delegates background materials determined by the Co-chairs to be necessary.
(b) NO COMPENSATION.—All members appointed under this Act shall serve in the roles for which they are appointed without compensation.

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

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

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

(3) the recommendations of the Conference—

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

(B) are the result of the independent and collective judgment of the delegates to the Conference; and

(4) not later than 30 days before the Conference is convened, the delegates to the Conference have access to information provided by relevant Federal agencies that includes—

(A) updated statistical data (including decennial census data) and other information on food and nutrition in the United States; and
(B) information necessary to evaluate Federal programs and policies relating to food and nutrition.

(d) GIFTS.—

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

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

(e) RECORDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Co-chairs shall maintain records regarding—

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

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

(2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—For each gift accepted under subsection (d), the records described in paragraph (1) shall be made public not later than 30 days after the date on which the gift is received.
SEC. 8. CONFERENCE REPORT.

(a) PRELIMINARY REPORT.—

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

(A) published in the Federal Register; and

(B) submitted to the chief executive officers of each of the States.

(2) VIEWS AND FINDINGS.—The Policy Committee shall request that, not later than 45 days after the submission of the report by the Policy Committee under paragraph (1)(B), the chief executive officers of each of the States shall submit to the Policy Committee views and findings with respect to that report.

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

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

(A) a compilation of the views and findings of the chief executive officers of each of the States submitted under subsection (a)(2); and
(B) recommendations for administrative action and legislation with respect to those views and findings; and

(2) publish in the Federal Register, and transmit to the President and to Congress, the recommendations described in paragraph (1)(B).

SEC. 9. STATUS REPORTS.

(a) Initial Status Report.—Not later than 2 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns, the Presidential Designee shall—

(1) prepare a status report documenting the implementation of the recommendations contained in the final report described in section 8(b)(1)(B); and

(2) publish in the Federal Register, and transmit to the President and to Congress, that status report.

(b) Subsequent Status Reports.—Not later than 5 years after the date on which the Conference adjourns, and every 2 years thereafter for not longer than 10 years, the Presidential Designee shall—

(1) prepare a status report documenting the implementation of the recommendations contained in that final report; and
(2) publish in the Federal Register, and transmit to the President and to Congress, that status report.

4 SEC. 10. COMMITTEE HEARINGS.

(a) HEARINGS ON REPORTS.—The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives shall each hold hearings on the recommendations and status reports transmitted to Congress under sections 8(b)(2), 9(a)(2), and 9(b)(2).

(b) HEARINGS ON STATUS OF HUNGER, NUTRITION SECURITY, AND FOOD SYSTEMS.—The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Rules of the House of Representatives shall each hold annual hearings on the status of hunger, food and nutrition insecurity, and resilient food systems in the United States.

(c) EXERCISE OF RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.—Subsections (a) and (b) are enacted—

(1) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and, as such, shall be considered as part of the rules of the Senate or the House of Representatives (as the
case may be), and such rules shall supersede any other rule of the Senate or the House of Representa-
tives only to the extent that any such rule is incon-
sistent therewith; and

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

SEC. 11. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) Authorization.—

(1) In general.—There are authorized to be appropriated $2,500,000 to carry out this Act for each of—

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

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

(2) Limitation.—Any new spending authority or new authority to enter into contracts under this Act, and under which the United States is obligated to make outlays, shall be effective only to the extent,
and in such amounts, as are provided in advance in
appropriation Acts.

(b) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—

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

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