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FAITH BY PLATE ACT

Amendment to Senate Bill 457
Appropriations Senate Bill TBD and House Bill TBD
Chief Sponsors: State Senator Ram Villivalam & State Representative Kevin Olickal

Inclusive Religious Dietary Meals in State Facilities

March 21, 2025, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the Halal Kosher Food Bill, Faith By Plate Act Public Act 103-0514, into law.

Overview & FAQs

What is the Kosher Halal Food Bill, "Faith By Plate Act"?
This bill will ensure that only facilities owned or operated by the State of Illinois with food services and cafeterias (i.e., schools, hospitals, and prisons) should, upon request, serve or provide for purchase religious dietary food options, such as halal, kosher, and plant-based. The Act will make Illinois the first state nationwide to mandate nutritional equity in such facilities. This law is:

The Right Thing. It guarantees equitable access to halal and kosher meals in public schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities.
A Model. Illinois is the first state to mandate this across public institutions, inspiring others nationwide.
Smart Business. It positions Illinois as a center for halal and kosher industries, driving job creation and economic growth.

What are the next steps now that the bill has passed into law?
State facilities have one year to implement the new requirements. Current multi-year vendor contracts will be honored until they expire. In that one year, we will:

- **Work with legislatures** to secure appropriations. Without funding, bills remain symbolic.
- **Work with public agencies** to devise a detailed plan for a strong implementation.

What is halal and kosher?
Halal and Kosher mean "permissible" in Arabic and Hebrew, guiding the dietary practices of Muslims and observant Jews. Halal requires specific animal slaughter methods and oversight of all ingredients. Kosher laws are complex, requiring supervision of food preparation and certification—even for generally kosher items. These meals are available to all, regardless of faith. This law promotes nutritional equity, inclusivity, and reduced food waste.

Who will benefit from the Faith By Plate Act?
Students, incarcerated individuals, patients, and employees in K-12 public schools, University of Illinois hospitals, and state prisons need access to healthy meals that comply with their faith's dietary laws and guidelines.

I don't have or don't follow religious dietary laws, so how does this benefit me? Can I eat, buy, or be served these meals?
Yes, these meals can also be served to any individual with any dietary needs, not just Muslims or Jews. These healthy meals can be both appetizing and cost-effective. The Faith By Plate Act ensures that if a person (e.g., a student) requests a religious dietary meal and such meals are also made available, they can have and enjoy the same food. This also benefits all employees, visitors, and those in the care of or served by these state facilities.

I understand what it means for religious food products such as halal or kosher to be certified, but why must a cafeteria or food service provider become certified to prepare and serve these types of meals?
Facilities serving halal or kosher meals must prevent cross-contamination through proper training and oversight from procurement to delivery. Sealed kosher meals do not require on-site supervision or certified staff to serve.

How do we identify strong and safe vendors?
All halal or kosher food products must be certified through the state's procurement (RFP) process. A designated state agency will manage approved halal and kosher certification agencies and vendors and share the vendor list and pricing terms with state facilities and the public.

What is the cost of providing these meals?
Halal meals typically cost the same as standard meals, though there may be a $0.25 per-meal increase. Certification requires oversight and training, similar to any quality management program, at minimal additional cost.

Kosher meals are fully certified and sealed and require no special equipment. Certification is included in the vendor's price—typically $5–$9 per student meal. Frozen meals can be delivered daily, weekly, or monthly, with delivery costs ranging from $45 to $100, depending on volume and location.

What groups are supporting this effort?
With a coalition of dozens of multicultural organizations co-led by the Muslim Civic Coalition and Agudath Israel of Illinois, the chief sponsors for the Faith By Plate Act are State Senator Ram Villivalam and State Representative Kevin Olickal. There is full support and collaboration with partners and allies throughout the state, all wanting to achieve nutritional equity. This coalition consults with stakeholders representing our state facilities in the education, health care, and corrections sectors.

Sources

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