

June 2, 2025

Member of Congress
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator,

The American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation's largest general farm organization, with nearly 6 million-member families in all 50 states and Puerto Rico encourages Congress to pass H.R. 649 and S.222, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act which modifies the current National School Lunch Program provisions to allow schools to offer students whole, reduced-fat, low-fat and fat-free flavored and unflavored milk.

Schools account for about 7.5% of total U.S. milk sales, making them an essential market for American dairy farmers. Milk, including whole, reduced-fat and flavored options, is also critical for children and adolescents who may not obtain necessary levels of vitamin D, potassium, high-quality protein, calcium, vitamin A, vitamin B12 and other key nutrients in their diet. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, approximately 90% of the U.S. population, including school-aged children, are not consuming enough dairy to support recommended nutrient intake. Seventy-three percent of the calcium available in the U.S. food supply is provided by milk and milk products, with milk also being the number one source of protein in the diets of children ages 2-11. Unfortunately, current dietary guidelines under the National School Lunch Program effectively prohibit whole and 2% milk in schools. These guidelines contradict modern nutritional science and limit the availability of nutritious dairy products.

It is widely recognized by pediatric dietitians that adequate fat intake is essential to proper brain development and supports the energy requirements of young children and adolescents.

In addition, numerous recent studies have debunked the previously asserted correlation between obesity and milk fat content. In a 2020 American Journal of Clinical Nutrition article, researchers stated that, "Relative to reduced-fat cow-milk, whole-fat cow-milk consumption was associated with lower odds of childhood overweight or obesity." The researchers in this article went even further by concluding that international guidelines that recommend reduced-fat milk for children may not lower the risk of childhood obesity. A second American Journal of Clinical Nutrition article from 2016 also found a positive correlation between milk fat content and vitamin D uptake, noting that, "whole milk consumption among healthy young children was associated with higher vitamin D stores and lower body mass index."

Children and adolescents often find whole and 2% milk options more palatable than low-fat or nonfat options. Numerous studies have shown modest-to-significant drops in milk consumption when flavored, whole and reduced-fat options are removed, limiting intake of essential nutrients. For example, a 2019 study published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found that significantly fewer students selected milk in schools when flavor options were removed. It also has been seen that between 2008 and 2018, weekly milk consumption per student dropped from 4.03 8-ounce bottles or cartons to 3.39, with the most significant drop after the Healthy, Hungry Free Kids Act (when 2% and whole milk options were removed) was implemented.

Whole and 2% milk options, including flavored options, are wholesome and favorable choices for children and should be available in all schools to promote childhood nutrition.

AFBF strongly supports the return of whole and 2% milk, flavored and unflavored, in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program as implementation of the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act would accomplish.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Zippy Duvall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "Z" and a long, sweeping underline.

Zippy Duvall
President