

March 20, 2019

We, the undersigned organizations, oppose the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2019 (H.R. 832) which would allow whole milk into schools, rolling back the progress schools have made in switching to milk lower in saturated fat. This legislation violates evidence-based standards that protect kids' health and would put children at greater risk of heart disease.

Current law requires that milk, and all foods and beverages served in schools, be consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. H.R. 832 removes that statutory requirement for milk, setting a dangerous precedent of prioritizing industry needs over children's health. While we are cognizant of the economic challenges facing America's dairy farmers, we must not let private sector interests override scientific evidence as it relates to children.

The 2015-2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends that children over two years consume fat-free and low-fat (1 percent) milk in place of 2 percent and whole milk in order to help reduce saturated fat intake to less than 10 percent of calories per day, as well as to help people shift to foods that are more nutrient-dense (that is, foods with more nutrients per calorie).

Milk is the second-largest source of saturated fat after cheese in the diets of school-age children aged 6 to 18 years. One cup of whole milk contains five grams of saturated fat, which is a quarter of the Daily Value (daily limit). Whole milk is so high in saturated fat that the government prohibits its labels from claiming that calcium can reduce the risk of osteoporosis; fat-free and low-fat milk, however, can make these claims.

Elevated levels of blood cholesterol contribute to atherosclerosis (the development of plaque that leads to clogged the arteries), which is a slow, progressive disease that may begin in childhood. Alarmingly, one in five children aged 8 to 17 years already has adverse cholesterol levels. The American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and other health authorities agree that replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats reduces the risk of heart disease in both children and adults.

Fortunately, fat-free and low-fat milk provide the same essential nutrients, such as calcium, vitamins A and D, and potassium, with less saturated fat (and fewer calories) than whole milk. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM, formerly the Institute of Medicine) 2009 report *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children* recommended that schools provide only fat-free and low-fat milk.

Because milk is a staple in children's diets, it is especially important to serve fat-free and low-fat options as the healthy norm. Congress should not be in the business of trumping evidence-based standards that were developed by scientists and nutrition experts to set kids up for better health. We urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Balanced, Inc.
California Food Policy Advocates

Center for Science in the Public Interest
ChangeLab Solutions
First Focus Campaign for Children
FoodCorps
Healthy School Food Maryland
Healthy Schools Campaign
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
Kid Healthy
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy
MomsRising
National WIC Association
Public Health Institute
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior