

Vote “NO” on Republican Efforts to Make School Meals Less Healthy

Republicans want to make school meals unhealthy by ignoring the latest science and undermining President Biden’s work to strengthen school meal nutrition.

School meal programs play a critical role in reducing child hunger and providing children with the healthy food they need. Milk offered as part of school meals can help deliver key nutrients. This makes it critical that we provide students with the most nutritious milk options.

Child nutrition standards for school meals, including for milk options, are set by the science-based Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs), which are periodically updated based on recommendations from child nutrition experts and the public.

The latest DGAs—along with the American Heart Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Center for Science in the Public Interest, National WIC Association, and [other public health advocates](#)—make clear that fat-free milk and low-fat milk are the healthiest options for children. Guided by the [science](#) on the harms of saturated fat, the DGAs [recommend](#) switching to fat-free or low-fat milk to limit saturated fat consumption.

- Whole milk contains far more saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories than fat-free milk and low-fat milk.
- Saturated fat from whole milk can contribute to early childhood heart disease.
- Fat-free milk and low-fat milk offer the same vital nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A, protein, and potassium, as whole milk.

Despite the strong science behind current nutrition standards, Congressional Republicans have politicized the issue, including standards for milk options in school meals. This effort goes against the dairy industry’s recent [commitment](#) to ensuring students have access to the healthiest dairy options consistent with the federal DGAs.

The Problem:

The *Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2023* (H.R. 1147), introduced by Rep. Glenn Thompson (PA-15), makes schools meals less healthy by ignoring the latest child nutrition science and adding whole milk and reduced-fat milk to school meal offerings. This would increase the total saturated fat content of school meals, which is currently capped at less than [10 percent](#) of total calories per week, and allow whole milk to be served in schools for the first time [since 2012](#). H.R. 1147 would also undermine the Biden Administration’s on-going [rulemaking](#) to align school nutrition standards with the latest science.

The Solution:

President Biden and Congressional Democrats have taken key steps to make school meals healthier for children:

- In February 2023, President Biden [started](#) the long-term process of updating child nutrition standards to align with the latest DGAs and provide children with the healthiest possible school meals. Congress should not interfere with the independent process.

- Last Congress, Committee Democrats advanced a science-based reauthorization of federal child nutrition programs—the [Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act](#)—to, among other things, strengthen evidence-based nutrition standards for school meals.