

## **Whole Milk Makes School Meals Less Healthy**

*Republicans want to make school meals unhealthy by ignoring the latest science and prioritizing special interest groups.*

School meal programs are critical 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, so we must provide students with the most nutritious options.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) inform child nutrition standards for school meals, including milk options. The DGAs are periodically updated based on evidence-based recommendations from nationally recognized scientific experts in nutrition and medicine, as well as public input. This apolitical process is already at risk under the Trump Administration, which has demonstrated a total lack of respect for proven public health interventions. There is widespread [concern](#) that the upcoming DGAs will scale back long-standing recommendations on saturated fat, a reversal from decades of nutrition guidance.

Still, the most recent DGAs—along with the American Heart Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Center for Science in the Public Interest, American Public Health Association, National WIC Association, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners and [other public health advocates](#)—make clear that fat-free and low-fat milk are the healthiest options for children two years and older.

Guided by [science](#), the current DGAs [recommend](#) fat-free or low-fat milk to limit saturated fat consumption because:

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

The [Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025](#) (S. 222), sponsored by Sen. Roger Marshall (KS), would make school meals less healthy by ignoring the latest child nutrition science and adding whole and reduced-fat milk to school meal offerings. This would increase the total saturated fat content of school meals, 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](#). This directly undermines the Biden Administration's [final rule](#) to align school nutrition standards with the latest science.

While S.222 would also provide schools with the option to offer nutritionally equivalent non-dairy beverages to all students, this does not take away from the fact that special interests are being prioritized over public health. S.222 also keeps in place needlessly burdensome requirements for students seeking

alternate non-dairy beverages if they are lactose intolerant. Under the bill, a school is only required to provide a substitute for fluid milk to students who have a note from a physician, parent, or legal guardian documenting a disability, which includes lactose intolerance. Additionally, the bill requires food service personnel to receive training on responding to and preventing food allergies.

Despite the strong science behind current nutrition standards, Congressional Republicans have politicized the policy and opened the door to corporate and industry influence that undoes our progress to make school meals healthier.

**Important Context:** Although school meals are one of the most important programs we have for reducing child hunger, Congressional Republicans have made [harmful cuts](#) to them to pay for their tax cuts that benefit the wealthy and the well-connected. The cuts to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Republicans' "Big Ugly Law" jeopardize children's access to nutrition school meals and threaten food security for millions of families.