



International Dairy Foods Association

Milk Industry Foundation

National Cheese Institute

International Ice Cream Association

August 17, 2010

The Honorable Sean Parnell
Governor
State of Alaska
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell,

Did you know that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that almost 90% of girls and 70% of boys don't meet their recommended intake of calcium and that insufficient calcium intake can put children at greater risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures as they grow older?

If the discussion of what foods are bad for our children is the sole focus of school wellness policies (or obesity prevention policies), we may lose sight of what our children need and lack nutritionally. And, according to the latest science, our children clearly need the nine essential nutrients, including calcium, provided by milk and dairy products.

The facts are that schools are offering fewer varieties of milk, while more are increasing the varieties of sports drinks and flavored waters available on school grounds. Not surprisingly, school kids are drinking less milk and more soft drinks, sports drinks and fruit drinks.

In light of this, we urge you to consider new research, which found that when schools do not offer children a variety of milk, including flavored milk, milk consumption dropped an average of 35%. While attempting to solve one problem, eliminating flavored milk creates a different one.

Numerous health professional organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the School Nutrition Association, support consumption of flavored milk by children, and the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans say adding a small amount of sugar to nutrient-dense foods like reduced-fat milk can improve nutrient intake without contributing excessive calories.

Dairy processors realize that our children need to reduce fat and sugar consumption and as a result we have invested millions of dollars to reformulate flavored milks. Nearly 95% of flavored milk now sold in schools is low-fat or fat-free. The average calorie level of flavored milk sold during the 2009-2010 school year was reduced nearly 8% compared to 2006-2007 and we are striving to lower calories even further.

Flavored milk is a healthful way to ensure students receive adequate nutrients. I have included two flyers further explaining the benefits of including flavored milk in the school lunch room. I hope you will consider this information when deciding which healthy foods belong in your state's school cafeterias.

Sincerely,

Connie Tipton
President and CEO

cc: Department of Education and State Food Service Director