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Science IN THE
Public Interest



American Dietetic
Association



International Dairy Foods Association
Milk Industry Foundation
National Cheese Institute
International Ice Cream Association



August 6, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

We, the undersigned organizations, applaud your leadership in addressing children's health and nutrition throughout the country. As the 2009 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization approaches, now is a good time to evaluate the nutritional quality of the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs.

Over 30 million children rely on the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs each day. Those meals play a critical role in ensuring children have healthy diets and establish life-long healthy eating patterns. Since 1946, milk has been a staple and essential component of school meals. Since 98% of maximum bone density is reached by age 20, it is especially important that children get enough calcium. In addition to being the number one source of calcium in Americans' diets, milk is a nutrient rich beverage that is a good or excellent source of eight other essential nutrients, and it provides three of the five "nutrients of concern" that children do not get enough of: magnesium, potassium and calcium.

Additionally, 44 million Americans have either low bone mass or osteoporosis, which causes two million fractures and costs \$19 billion a year in direct hospital and nursing home expenses. A healthy diet -- especially adequate calcium consumption -- and weight-bearing exercise can help build bone mass and prevent debilitating fractures.

The milk served in schools should be consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The *Dietary Guidelines* recommend school-age children consume either fat-free or 1% milk, which may include flavored milk. Although the majority of schools now serve fat-free and 1% milk, reducing high levels of saturated fat intake among children remains an important goal. For this reason, it is important to ensure that lowfat or fat-free milk be the norm in schools.

Section 9 (2)(A)(i) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act states that:

IN GENERAL.—Lunches served by schools participating in the school lunch program under this Act—

(i) shall offer students fluid milk in a variety of fat contents

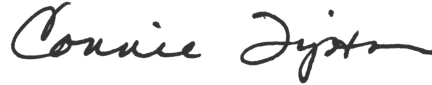
To provide consistency with the *Dietary Guidelines*, (i) should be replaced with:
(i) shall offer students a variety of fluid milk consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

This simple change would make it easier for schools to serve low-fat and fat-free milk, and would enhance the nutritional quality of school meals. We look forward to working with you on this important change to the child nutrition program.

Sincerely,



Margo Wootan
Director of Nutrition Policy
Center for Science in the Public Interest



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