

69th Legislative Assembly
Cari Kramer
Superintendent, Solen Public School District

HOUSE BILL NO. 1132

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cari Kramer, and I am the Solen Public School District which serves the communities of Solen and Cannon Ball, North Dakota. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit my online testimony to speak in favor of House Bill No. 1132.

I am in support of allowing 2%, whole, and flavored milk to be served as options in school lunch programs. I believe that providing a variety of milk options is essential for promoting student health, ensuring balanced nutrition, and supporting the diverse preferences and needs of our students.

As the superintendent of a high poverty school district, including 100% free and reduced meals, ensuring my students have their basic needs met is an ongoing challenge and worry for me and my staff. We are continuously searching for avenues of improvements and resources. Research supports the notion that, for children in poverty, whole milk and 2% milk is generally considered the best options due to because the added fat content can provide a more substantial source of energy, potentially helping them feel fuller for longer and preventing them from skipping meals due to hunger, especially when access to other nutritious foods may be limited. The majority of the schools in my district have very limited access to a diverse diet. The nutrients in whole milk and 2% milk also helps with filling kids' energy tanks throughout the day. It is not my opinion that skim milk and 1 % milk are poor options for kids, it is simply these options are good for students who are eating a well-balanced diet. However, when students who have a limited diet and food source are limited to skim milk and 1% milk, they are missing out on vital nutrients needed for their growth and development. Additionally, after twenty plus years of working with our youth, it is safe to say the 2% milk and whole milk are not contributing factors to the childhood obesity epidemic that is plaguing our youth.

Additionally, when flavored milk is offered, research indicates that school milk consumption rates increase, benefiting students who may otherwise miss out on important nutrients. This is particularly important in the context of school lunch programs, where adequate nutrition plays a critical role in students' health, learning, and academic performance.

By providing a broader selection of milk choices, schools can ensure that all students have access to a nutritious option that aligns with their tastes and dietary needs, encouraging higher participation in the meal program.

Allowing these milk options to be served in bulk milk dispensers in school cafeterias also supports local dairy farmers. By increasing demand for a variety of milk options, we help sustain local agriculture and ensure that dairy farming remains a viable industry in our state. Additionally, the inclusion of more milk options supports the dairy industry's continued innovation and product development, which benefits the economy and enhances the nutritional quality of school meals. This bill has the potential to make a meaningful impact to our great state by enhancing consumer access to locally produced dairy products while supporting our state's dairy farmers. Additionally, the use of bulk milk dispensers will decrease the need for packaging materials and reduce the waste of materials. Another benefit of bulk milk dispensers will cut down on the waste of the milk in itself and eliminate worries such as outdated milk, milk waste and delivery issues.

In conclusion, allowing 2%, whole, and flavored milk to be served as options in our school lunch programs is a common-sense approach to improving the nutrition and health of all students. It provides essential nutrients that children need for growth and development, encourages milk consumption, supports local dairy farmers, and meets the diverse preferences and dietary needs of our students. I strongly urge the committee to support House Bill 1132 that allows these milk options in schools, as it will have lasting benefits for the health and well-being of our students.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, this concludes by written testimony. I thank you for the opportunity.