

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Leads bipartisan call to support whole milk products in federal programs

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GREEN BAY, WI — Rep. Mike Gallagher (WI-08) today led members of the Wisconsin delegation in calling on the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Sonny Perdue, and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Alex Azar, to reconsider dietary guidelines that prohibit full-fat dairy products from being included in federal programs, such as school lunch programs. The lawmakers wrote, “Full-fat dairy products provide a nutrient-dense complete source of protein full of healthy fats our bodies need to promote a healthy weight and fend off chronic disease. Updating the policies on saturated fats and full-fat dairy products will not only benefit recipients of government feeding programs, including our children in schools across the country, but also our nation’s dairy farmers and the rural economies they support by providing the potential to increase domestic demand for the healthy, wholesome milk they produce.”

The bipartisan letter, signed by Reps. Ron Kind (WI-03), Glenn Grothman (WI-06), and Tom Tiffany (WI-07), urges Secretary Perdue and Secretary Azar to consider recent studies on saturated fats and its impact on Americans health. As Laurie Fischer, Founder and CEO of the American Dairy Coalition, said “We must not implement the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans until the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services certify that the information in this report is based on the most up to date scientific research and unbiased review protocols, as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM). This entire process has been flawed for many years, as noted in the NASEM September 2017 report entitled: “Redesigning the Process for Establishing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.” The DGA should include the most current scientific studies on nutrition, including the most recent publications and reviews on weight loss, carbohydrate restriction, and saturated fat intake to determine the dietary needs of all Americans. Utilizing flexibilities in the choice of full fat dairy foods, such as a glass of whole milk for school children, is a necessary part of a balanced, healthy diet for all Americans. We should not wait another 5 years to address this broken process.”

Gallagher led this effort after consulting with dairy farmers across the state. Following the introduction of the letter, JJ Pagel, a dairy farmer in Northeast Wisconsin, said, “We are grateful for our congressman, especially my very own Rep. Gallagher, for taking the lead on this important issue. I’m proud to be a dairy farmer in the heart of America’s Dairyland, producing wholesome, safe, affordable milk each and every day. But the ban on whole milk and whole fat dairy foods needs to end. It’s time that we are able to offer our best tasting, most nutritious product as a choice- especially for our kids in schools. We need to get this right.”

The full letter is available [HERE](#) and found below.

Dear Secretary Perdue and Secretary Azar,

We write to you today out of concern for the latest actions by the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee regarding full-fat dairy products. As members of the Wisconsin delegation, we have the pleasure of representing thousands of hard-working dairy farmers who pride themselves on the high-quality, nutritious, and affordable foods they produce to provide a vital dietary staple for families across the nation. Since 2010, however, some of our dairy farmers’ most nutrient rich products have been banned from school lunch programs across the country.

Since 1980, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) have become the principal policy guiding nutrition in the United States. The DGA has an enormous influence on American eating habits and is required by law to be updated every five years. The advice given to every American from doctors, nutritionists, dietitians, and other health care professionals and professional associations comes directly from the Guidelines, influencing hospital and institutional nutrition programs, as well as feeding programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants, and Children program. We are concerned that the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) did not fairly or seriously consider a massive body of recent science-based research showing that longstanding caps on saturated fats are not supported by science. This includes large, government-funded studies on more than 75,000 people, demonstrating that saturated fats have no effect on cardiovascular or total mortality. The 2020 DGAC relied instead on reviews conducted in 2015 and 2010, which were deemed by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) to be unsystematic and, therefore, unreliable. It is time to lift the ban on saturated fats to allow the choice of whole milk back into our schools. Full-fat dairy products provide a nutrient-dense complete source of protein full of healthy fats our bodies need to promote a healthy weight and fend off chronic disease. Updating the policies on saturated fats and full-fat dairy products will not only benefit recipients of government feeding programs, including our children in schools across the country, but also our nation’s dairy farmers and the rural economies they support by providing the potential to increase domestic demand for the healthy, wholesome milk they produce. Due to the questions posed after the last round of updates to the DGA in 2015, Congress mandated the first ever third-party review of the process by the prestigious NASEM at a cost of \$1,000,000. The NASEM report was issued in September 2017, providing a list of recommendations to fix the broken system, yet the 2020 DGAC has not adopted the majority of the recommendations. Americans deserve full transparency on the recommendations provided by NASEM and the proposed changes deserve a fair and full consideration by the 2020 DGAC.

The dietary recommendations that determine much of what Americans consume must be based on the most up to date research from an unbiased team of advisors. We ask that you work to ensure the publication of the DGA is updated to include the most recent scientific evidence on the benefits of saturated fats. We ask your office to review and address the flawed process and implement the recommendations from the NASEM.

We appreciate your work to ensure Americans are healthy and that those who produce our food are able to do so for years to come.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (WI-08)

Rep. Ron Kind (WI-03)

Rep. Glenn Grothman (WI-06)

Rep. Tom Tiffany (WI-07)