

April 26, 2004

Mr. Jerry Kozak  
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Ms. Connie Tipton  
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Mr. Tom Gallagher  
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Dear Mr. Kozak, Ms. Tipton, and Mr. Gallagher:

As researchers and nutrition and health professionals, we urge you to give careful consideration to the nutritional quality of the beverages you market and make available to children in schools. We encourage you to work with schools, Congress, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure that the milk available in school cafeterias and vending machines is either low-fat (1%) or fat-free.

We recognize that milk is an important source in children's diets of essential vitamins and minerals, such as calcium and vitamins A and D. Since 98% of maximum bone density is reached by age 20, it is especially important that children get enough calcium.<sup>1</sup> Median daily intake (700 mg) of calcium by teenage girls is about half of the recommended level (1300 mg).<sup>2</sup>

However, we are concerned that milk is also the largest source of saturated fat in children's diets.<sup>3</sup> Three out of four children consume more saturated fat than is recommended in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.<sup>4</sup> The beginnings of atherosclerosis are seen in children as young as ten years old, and a quarter of children ages 5 to 10 years old already have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or other risk factor for heart disease.<sup>5</sup>

Currently, two-thirds (63%) of the milk ordered by schools is high in fat – either 2% or whole milk.<sup>6</sup> Since milk is a staple in the diet, 2% milk is of concern. Three cups of 2% milk provide 50% of the daily value for saturated fat.

Many flavored milks that could be available in school vending machines or snack lines contain more calories than a 20-oz. soda, and contain considerably more saturated fat. A single-serve container (14 oz.) of whole flavored milk, like Hershey's Vanilla Cream Milk Shake, can contain as many as 560 calories and 8 grams of saturated fat. A container (16 oz.) of Nesquik Chocolate Milk is only modestly better, with 400 calories and 6 grams of saturated fat.

We have been encouraged by the work that the dairy industry is doing to help get soda and other low-nutrition foods out of schools. However, the dairy industry, positioning itself as a champion of healthy school nutrition environments through efforts such as the Action for Healthy Kids network, must ensure that your own products meet the same high nutrition standards to which you hold foods sold by your competitors in schools.

To protect children's health, the dairy industry should work to ensure that the milk served with school meals, offered in school vending machines, promoted in your curricula and marketing campaigns, and required in state and federal laws for which you advocate is low in saturated fat. Such efforts would help to ensure that children receive the calcium and vitamin D they need in order to protect their bones, without the saturated fat that can increase their risk of heart disease.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure

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<sup>1</sup> National Osteoporosis Foundation. *Disease Statistics: Fast Facts*. Accessed at <<http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis/stats.htm>> on August 30, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> National Academy of Sciences. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium, Phosphorous, Magnesium, Vitamin D, and Fluoride*. Washington, D.C: National Academy Press, 1997.

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