

June 8, 2026

School Meals Policy Division

Food and Nutrition Service

1320 Braddock Place

Alexandria, VA 22314

Comment on Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs (Docket No. FNS-2026-0067-0001)

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) efforts to expand fluid milk options within the Child Nutrition Programs.

The Chef Ann Foundation (CAF) is a national non-profit dedicated to promoting whole-ingredient, scratch cooking in schools. We help schools replace ultra-processed foods with fresh, healthy, and delicious scratch-cooked meals that nourish kids and protect the planet. Since 2009, our programs have reached more than 19,000 schools in all 50 states, bringing better meals to 5.9 million kids.

Our mission is to ensure that school food professionals have the resources, funding, and support they need to provide fresh, healthy, delicious, cooked-from-scratch meals that support the health of children and our planet. Scratch, whole-ingredient cooking in schools is a vehicle to achieving many different goals on our path forward to healthier communities, including the reduction of ultra-processed foods in schools.

CAF supports FNS' efforts to continue updating and refining guidance for the Child Nutrition Programs based on the most recent scientific evidence. Expanding whole milk availability across the Child Nutrition Programs helps diversify options for kids' access to protein sources, minerals,



and vitamins. To ensure all students have access to nutrient-dense options while decreasing their intake of ultra-processed foods and added sugars, we support a multifaceted strategy. Beyond the inclusion of whole milk, we urge FNS to broaden access to non-dairy milk alternatives and prohibit flavored milk at the elementary grade level.

Per the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, we also encourage FNS to promulgate rulemaking to expand non-dairy alternatives to milk to other Child Nutrition Programs, including the School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Special Milk Program (SMP). While the current final rule successfully expands fluid milk options such as whole and 2% milk across these programs, it excludes the Act's provisions for readily available, nutritionally equivalent non-dairy beverages. This expansion is critical to ensure operational viability and consistency across all meal services, providing a nutritionally appropriate beverage option to students with an allergy, disability, or intolerance to dairy.

Consistent with the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that children under the age of 11 consume no added sugars, we strongly urge FNS to prohibit the service of flavored milk at the elementary grade level. While schools have made progress, flavored milk remains a contributor of added sugars in school meal programs. Prohibiting flavored milk in elementary schools is a critical step toward establishing healthy dietary patterns early in life and reducing the prevalence of chronic diseases.

Thank you for your efforts to expand fluid milk options across the Child Nutrition Programs. Students need healthy food and nutrition to fuel their growth and learning, and a suite of beverage options that are nutrient-dense, exclude added sugars, and accommodate disabilities will help school food programs achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mara Fleishman", written in a cursive style.

Mara Fleishman
Chief Executive Officer
Chef Ann Foundation

