

ADD SOY Act provides school children with a nutritious dairy-free option

Bipartisan bill would eliminate \$300 million wasted tax money while providing an option for kids made sick by milk served in the National School Lunch Program.

IRVINE, CALIFORNIA, USA, August 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When Switch4Good executive director Dotsie Bausch learned that a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study revealed that 29% of the milk served as part of

the National School Lunch Program ((NSLP) is thrown in the [garbage](#), effectively tossing \$300 million in tax dollars into the trash each year, it didn't sit right with her. Cow's milk doesn't sit right with two-thirds of the human population as lactose intolerance or a dairy allergy, meaning that a significant portion of the 30 million American children who receive meals as part of NSLP

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Dotsie Bausch

are suffering the consequences – either from an adverse reaction to drinking milk or by missing out on important nutrition after discarding the milk. Presently, there is no dairy-free milk option available for kids in the NSLP, which inspired the ADD SOY Act (Addressing Digestive Distress in Stomachs of Our Youth), a bipartisan bill introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives by Reps. Troy Carter (D-LA) and Nancy Mace (R-SC) as H.R. 1619.

Bausch was in Washington last week to meet with representatives in the effort to get the ADD SOY Act added as an amendment to the Richard B. Russell National School

Lunch Act. Joining her was eighteen-year-old Marielle Williamson, who sued the USDA and the Los Angeles Unified School District last May for violating her rights, forcing her to praise cow's milk in addition to the literature she was distributing to students at her high school about dairy-free alternatives.

The 2020 U.S. Dietary Guidelines recognized fortified soy milk as a nutritional equivalent to cow's



milk thus making it available as an option in the NSLP seemed like an ideal solution to Bausch. Schools are not currently reimbursed if they provide soy milk as an option, yet the USDA is reimbursing public schools \$1 billion annually for cow's milk – even though they know kids are dumping \$300 million dollars of milk into the trash. A 2015 study revealed that an astonishing 73% of U.S. dairy income came from government programs like the NSLP.

Placing milk on students' trays dates back to 1946 when the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act became law. The end of World War 2 left America with a surplus of supplies, including milk. President Harry S. Truman sent the milk to schools. The NSLP provides 47% of the daily caloric intake of the children in the program. Throwing out the milk, approximately 45 million gallons per year, means the kids are missing a sizable portion of their daily nutrition.

Lactose intolerance is the inability to break down the lactose (milk sugar) in cow's milk into simpler sugars for absorption into the bloodstream, resulting in undigested lactose remaining in the gastrointestinal tract. This may cause diarrhea, nausea, cramping, bloating and vomiting. Cow's milk is the most common food allergen impacting infants and young children and has become the leading cause of food allergen death. Symptoms include rashes, hives, wheezing, vomiting and anaphylaxis. Long-term effects of lactose intolerance include compromised immune systems, respiratory, gastrointestinal and skin problems. These debilitating symptoms have a profound negative impact on kids' ability to concentrate on their lessons.

According to the National Institutes of Health, the majority of humans have a decreased ability to digest lactose after infancy. Research shows that up to 80% of Black and Latin Americans, more than 80% of Native Americans, and up to 95% of Asian Americans are lactose intolerant. Thus, placing milk on trays for children participating in the NSLP, which is required for those meals to be reimbursed by the USDA, is a mandate that unfairly impacts a higher percentage of BIPOC children.

"When you sit in the classroom wheezing, coughing and your stomach is cramping, it makes concentrating on your studies nearly impossible. Cow's milk could very well be the reason there is a learning gap between black and white children," said Dr. Milton Mills, a critical care physician based in Washington, DC.

"With a larger portion of those participating in the National School Lunch Program being BIPOC children, putting milk on their trays is a form of racism – dietary racism. It is systemic, structural inequities surrounding food and nutrition that disproportionately impacts people of color. We know that cow's milk is making children sick and not providing an option is unjust. The fact that so many kids are throwing out those unopened milk cartons is an enormous waste of taxpayer money," said Bausch.

Key bipartisan support for the ADD SOY Act in the Senate will be announced soon. Before introducing the bill, 31 members of Congress wrote to Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack to address the dairy industry monopoly in the NSLP. The letter asks that soy milk be made an

available alternative to cow's milk. However, Vilsack, who is deeply entrenched in the dairy lobby money train having been CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council between his agriculture secretary appointments for the Obama and Biden administrations, ignored Congress's request. Subsequently, a letter was sent to the White House Equity Commission from multiple civil rights, social justice and health organizations, including the National Urban League, calling on the USDA to end dietary racism. This letter was ignored by the Commission.

"We need people to write or call their representatives asking them to support the ADD SOY Act. If thousands of their constituents call or write, they must pay attention and get onboard. Getting as many signatures as possible is our top priority. We need to put pressure on Congress to pass the ADD SOY Act in order to stop this government waste and right this wrong that is hurting our children," said Bausch.

The Switch4Good website has a form letter available that can quickly be sent to the signer's representatives. Access it [HERE](#).

"People don't really like to drink cow's milk anymore, and they have other sources of dairy," Williamson told the Washington Post.

The ADD SOY Act will make an alternative source available to U.S. school children.

Rick Scott
Switch4Good
+1 310-714-0248

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