Dear Ms. Fox,

You recently announced that our school district might stop serving chocolate milk in our cafeterias. I thought it might be helpful to hear the perspective of a student—and chocolate-milk lover—on this important issue.

After extensive research, I’ve learned that chocolate milk has many health benefits for kids like me. Although it may seem like just a tasty treat, it’s actually filled with nutrients, including calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is especially good for kids my age because we are still growing, and calcium helps build healthy bones. In addition, chocolate milk contains protein and healthy fats that keep kids full and focused throughout the day.

Of course, regular milk provides those same benefits—as do other foods like spinach and nuts—and with less sugar. But let’s be honest: Banning chocolate milk doesn’t mean kids will choose something healthier instead. A study by Cornell University found that chocolate-milk bans can lead to kids drinking less milk overall. And when have you ever heard a kid say, “There’s no chocolate milk? In that case, I’ll have some spinach, please!” What would probably happen is that we’d drink more soda or sweetened fruit drinks, which are just as sugary (if not more) but don’t have the same health benefits.

Here’s another problem: food waste. When schools in Los Angeles began serving only plain milk in 2011, tons of milk—and money—was wasted. Hardly anyone drank the plain milk, and much of it ended up in the trash. For this reason, L.A. schools put chocolate milk back on the menu in 2018.

Chocolate milk clearly deserves a place in our cafeteria. I hope that you will take my points into consideration as you make your decision.

Sincerely,

Lizzy Brewer
Dear Ms. Fox,

I am writing to you to tell you that as a student, I am in full support of a chocolate milk ban in our district. I like chocolate milk as much as the next kid. But according to my research, the sad truth is that we shouldn’t be drinking it every day at school.

Why? It’s loaded with sugar. One small carton contains about 1.5 teaspoons of added sugar. The American Heart Association advises kids to consume less than 3 to 4 teaspoons of added sugar per day. Do you see where I’m going with this? One small carton of chocolate milk at lunch is HALF your day’s added sugar!

All that sugar in chocolate milk, plus the sugar in the snacks many of us eat throughout the day, can really add up. In the long term, a diet high in sugar can make you more likely to develop certain diseases, including obesity and heart disease. In the short term? Too much sugar gives you a rush of energy and then makes you tired—which means you’re falling asleep by sixth period.

It’s true that chocolate milk contains calcium and protein, but is chocolate milk really the best source of these nutrients? Many experts say no. Ann Cooper, the director of food services in a Colorado school district, said in an interview with The Washington Post: “Trying to get students to consume calcium by drinking chocolate milk is like getting them to eat apples by serving them apple pie.” When you think about it that way, serving chocolate milk at school seems silly, right?

Plenty of other foods—fish, leafy greens, almonds—provide the calcium and protein that kids need. There is also, of course, regular milk. Fans of chocolate milk claim that taking away the chocolate option leads to kids drinking less milk overall, but that isn’t always the case. In 2018, San Francisco tested a chocolate milk ban in five different schools and did not experience a dip in milk consumption at any of them.

I know that those in favor of chocolate milk say that it’s healthier than soda or juice, but think about it: Is that a good reason to keep it around?

Thank you for considering my opinion,

Michael Wilson