

Quotes in support

“The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act recognizes that today’s school meals must nourish our children’s bodies and minds while also protecting the planet they’ll inherit. We thank Representatives Velázquez and Adams for leading the way toward a healthier generation and a healthier planet.” - **Erich Pica, President, Friends of the Earth**

“Plant-based school meals are a powerful tool for keeping students healthy, helping them perform well, and reducing their risk for conditions like obesity and type 2 diabetes. It is especially encouraging that the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act seeks to remove barriers that currently prevent students—especially students of color who are more likely to be unable to digest lactose—from easily accessing nondairy milks at school.” – **Neal Barnard, MD, President, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine**

“As a student in the Bronx, I see every day how our school meals shape our eating habits and our health. For students who rely on free lunch, it’s often the main meal of the day. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act will help schools like mine serve more nourishing plant-based options and help our generation achieve our full potential.”

– **Yandel Ramirez, a high school senior in the Bronx**

“As a School Nutrition Director, I support this bill because it enables us to serve 100% plant-based meals that align with Farm to School goals such as serving seasonal, locally sourced ingredients and promoting whole foods. The pilot grants would help districts expand scratch-cooked menus through training, procurement assistance, and support for the added labor these meals require. Expanding reimbursable nondairy options and providing infrastructure for scratch-cooked meals gives us the flexibility to accommodate dietary needs adequately and properly address food allergies, so that every student can eat safely and without barriers.” – **Amanda Warren, Director of School Nutrition, Staunton City Schools in Virginia**

“As federal and state priorities move toward phasing out ultra-processed foods from school meals, school districts will need to serve students more meals cooked from scratch using fresh, whole ingredients. We know it’s important for kids to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, beans, and grains as part of a healthy diet. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act will equip schools with the resources they need to level the playing field so they can meet the growing demand for healthy, delicious plant-forward menu items.” – **Mara Fleishman, CEO, Chef Ann Foundation**

“We commend Representatives Velázquez and Adams for their commitment to fighting hunger through the introduction of this transformative legislation, which will help ensure every student receives nutritious and delicious meals that meet their needs. Being on the ground, we see how the impacts of school meals extend far beyond the classroom. Any student going hungry is unacceptable and sets the student and the country up for failure. The Plant-Powered School

Meals Pilot Act is a monumental step toward a sustainable and thriving future for both our planet and every eater in the country.” – **Eloísa Trinidad, Executive Director, Chilis on Wheels**

“The Plant Based Foods Association celebrates the introduction of the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act. This important legislation will support schools in offering more delicious, nutritious plant-based foods and providing much-needed options to deliver the nutrition that students need.” – **Marjorie Mulhall, Senior Director of Policy, Plant Based Foods Association**

“We live in a world where healthy, sustainable eating is a struggle. With this bill, we can begin to make nourishing foods a convenient choice for our kids. If passed, we are one step closer to a future where health is the default, not the exception.” – **Sheryl Allen, Dietitian and Founder, Nudge to Nourish**

“Over the past decade, we at New Roots Institute have heard from hundreds of thousands of students, and the message is clear: about 80 to 90 percent want more plant-based options at school. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act answers that call by helping schools meet students’ growing demand for nourishing, sustainable, and inclusive meals. This bill honors young people’s leadership in shaping a healthier and more equitable future for all.” – **Monica Chen, Executive Director, New Roots Institute**

“At a time when diet-related health concerns and climate change are significantly and increasingly impacting students, this bill gives schools the opportunity to implement options that can address both in a way that does not impact the food service department's bottom line. Although plant-based options can be cost neutral and even cost-saving in some cases, many schools still need initial assistance to implement plant-based offerings.” – **Amie Hamlin, Executive Director, Coalition for Healthy School Food**

Our nation’s school cafeterias shape how kids connect with food and with each other, so every child should have nourishing options that meet their needs. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act would help my daughters’ schools offer a wider variety of healthy, plant-based meals that excite them to try new foods and inspire lifelong healthy eating habits. – **Helen Dombalis, a parent in North Carolina**

“The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act is a smart, forward-thinking solution that empowers schools to serve healthier, climate-friendly, and culturally inclusive meals. It meets rising student demand and ensures all kids have access to nourishing options that reflect who they are. Our work with students in classrooms has shown us how powerful food education can be—when it’s paired with access to healthy meals in the cafeteria, it transforms lives.” – **Andrea Flowers, Program and Outreach Manager, Healthy Kids Happy Planet**

“I believe a more sustainable, equitable, and nourishing food system can improve the lives of millions of students across America. As a public high school student, I’ve seen how limited plant-based options are for students affected by food apartheid who rely on school meals and

choose plant-based diets for health, religious, ethical, or climate reasons. Years of witnessing this inspired me to become an advocate for greater access to plant-based food in schools.” – **Neel Gonugunta, High School Student, School District of Marshfield, Wisconsin**

“Increasing plant-based foods and milk alternatives across the nation's 7 billion annual school meals will significantly lower food-related greenhouse gas emissions and result in better outcomes for nature and biodiversity. The Plant-Powered School Meals Pilot Act makes school meals more nutritious, accessible, and equitable for students while helping build a more just and sustainable food system.” – **Leah Kelly, Food and Agriculture Policy Specialist, Center for Biological Diversity**

“I’m so excited that the Plant-Powered School Meals Act will help students have the choice to eat delicious, healthy plant-based meals.” – **Micha James, Director of Nutrition Services, Monterey Peninsula USD**

“As a physician and a parent of a sixth grader, I very much want to see more plant-based options offered in our public schools. By increasing access to delicious, plant-based school meal options, the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act will help reduce the risk of health problems for children, including type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. Plus, children from underserved communities often rely on school meals as a main source of nutrition. This Act will help level the playing field for those most at risk for poverty and hunger. It’s a win-win.”– **Asha Subramanian, MD, MPH, Board-Certified Family and Lifestyle Medicine Physician**

“Mercy For Animals applauds Representative Velázquez and Representative Adams for championing the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act, a forward-thinking bill that places student health, equity and environmental responsibility at the forefront. Mercy For Animals is proud to support this legislation, which removes outdated barriers to plant-based foods in schools and empowers districts to meet the growing demand for nutritious, culturally appropriate and sustainable meal options. By helping schools shift toward more plant-based meals, the bill also reduces reliance on animal agriculture and spares countless animals a life of suffering in our food system.” – **Frances Chrzan, Senior Federal Policy Manager, Mercy For Animals**

“As a high school student, I’ve seen many of my classmates excluded from traditional school meals due to dietary, religious, or cultural restrictions. Plant-based meals are a more inclusive choice as they generally meet the needs of students who are halal, lactose-intolerant, vegetarian, or have other dietary considerations. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act ensures that every student can access meals that align with their beliefs, regardless of their circumstances.” – **Tanay Anantasagar, a student in Houston Independent School District**

“As a low-income high school student, I depend on school meals for my daily nutrition, yet accommodating a plant-forward diet has been a constant challenge. This struggle isn't mine alone—every day, I watch friends skip lunch because of food allergies, see students unable to eat meals that conflict with their religious practices, and hear about families struggling to get a

doctor's note just to get non-dairy milk for their children. Plant-based meal options would transform school nutrition through improving student health, increasing accessibility for students with diverse needs, and creating a more sustainable future for our schools and our planet.”

– **Emily Lin, a high school student at El Monte Union High School District in California**

“I am excited for the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act because it gives schools an opportunity to better support their students and the planet. We need more climate-friendly, nutritious, inclusive, and humane food options in the K-12 school system. As a student, I’m especially concerned about the climate crisis and dietary needs of my peers, and hope to see more sustainable and accessible school food in the future!”

– **Ahana Srivastava, a recent graduate of Wake County Public Schools in North Carolina**

“The school cafeteria is another classroom—a place of learning. The Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act makes it possible for schools to align that learning with their values of health, sustainability, and equity. It empowers students to understand where their food comes from and how it impacts the world, helping them become compassionate, informed leaders.”

– **Steve Cochrane, a former school superintendent and the Executive Director of the Institute for Humane Education**

“Consumers and especially students want to align their food choices with their values. And, they value health and a stable climate future. Helping schools to honor student values will benefit students, schools, and our entire communities.”

– **Liz Moran, New York Policy Advocate, Earthjustice**

“Students with dietary restrictions especially rely on schools to provide nutritious food they can eat. Bringing lunch from home isn’t an option for many, resulting in skipping meals and having difficulty focusing in class. The Plant-Powered School Meals Pilot Act doesn’t just support a minority of students, but rather all kids to have increased access to healthy school food.”

– **Livia Aschheim, a student at Fremont Union High School District in California**

“As a high school student who doesn't eat red meat and wants my school to be able to reduce its carbon footprint, this bill would greatly assist my school district and others in providing more plant-based meal options. Currently, it's difficult to access fully plant-based meals in my cafeteria because of financial concerns. With this bill, school districts will be able to move towards a more sustainable and inclusive future.”

– **Vienna Dschung, a high school senior at Weston High School in Massachusetts**

“As a vegan student for ethical and environmental reasons, I was unable to eat at my high school's cafeteria until after I spent 100+ hours during my junior year campaigning for a daily plant-based option. While I cared deeply about this work, I was also disappointed that I needed to actively fight for plant-based options. I support the Plant Powered School Meals Pilot Act because it would give future students a stable plant-based option in school so they can feel fueled

to pursue their passions outside of changing their school menus.” – **Morgan Greenlaw, Student, an alumna of Palo Alto Unified School District in California**

“Switching to a plant-based diet gave younger me a sense of autonomy and independence—but my school's underwhelming lunches left me feeling left behind and as if I couldn't make my own personal dietary choices. Lack of accessible meal options at my public school meant I ended up eating the same greasy, unhealthy foods every day. A program like this would have been a lifesaver and made me feel welcome at school.” – **Quincy Alberhasky, a recent high school graduate from Missouri**