

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

January 17, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write for your support in urging the department to more clearly recognize Greek yogurt under the MyPlate nutrition guides. Currently, Greek yogurt is not differentiated from regular yogurt, despite the fact that it has twice the protein, more calcium and is low fat.

Greek yogurt is a nutrient dense food that provides an excellent source of protein and a good source of calcium per serving, making it an ideal option within the Dairy and Protein Food Groups. In fact, a standard serving of Greek yogurt has more protein than an equivalent portion of beans, yet it is not included in the list of protein sources in current USDA nutrition materials, nor is it recognized as a type of yogurt on the dairy page.

Greek yogurt being one of this country's fastest growing food industries, accounting for almost 30% or \$1.956 billion of the national yogurt market, it has become a popular, nutritious snack for adults and children, alike. We respectfully request that the USDA update its nutrition guidelines and education materials so as to include Greek yogurt as a nutritious offering and reflect its positive health attributes.

In addition, we urge that the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs allow schools and administrators to appropriately account for high-protein Greek yogurt as an affordable protein option. These programs served more than 31 million student meals daily in 2011. This policy improvement will give our nation's school-aged children another tasty way to get the protein they need to grow and thrive. Accordingly, we believe that our states are ideal locations to demonstrate the many benefits that can be gained by crediting Greek yogurt in Children Nutrition programs in a fashion that reflects its protein content. We believe that a pilot program along these lines will demonstrate that these many nutritional and related benefits for our students may be achieved at a lower cost to both the Federal government and our schools. Offering the option for the crediting of Greek yogurt on a protein content basis will free the creativity of school nutrition professionals to deliver enhanced nutrition at lower cost.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully urge that you authorize a pilot program that allows—does not require—schools and other institutions participating in USDA Child Nutrition programs to be credited for reimbursement for Greek yogurt on a basis that reflects the protein content for Greek yogurt.

If our children are going to have the opportunity to reach their potential, they need a healthy start. And the best way to achieve this is to give students options that are both good for them and taste good while pricing them appropriately so that schools can afford them. We look forward to working with the USDA to include Greek yogurt as a healthy, locally produced, choice for all Americans.

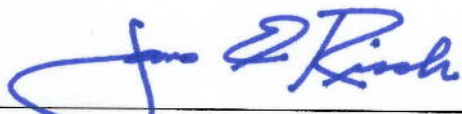
Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate



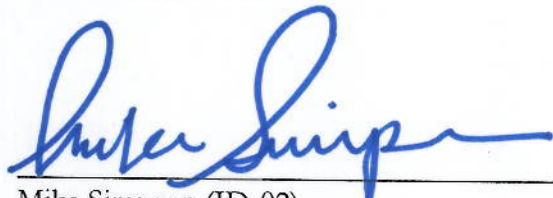
Mike Crapo  
United States Senate



James E. Risch  
United States Senate



Richard Hanna (NY-22)  
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson (ID-02)  
Member of Congress