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I am submitting this comment in response to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's request for public comment on the Special Milk Program information collection revision. As a future registered dietitian, I strongly support efforts that maintain efficient administration and oversight of programs designed to promote nutrition among children. The SMP plays an important role in encouraging the consumption of fluid milk, a key source of calcium, vitamin D, and protein, which are critical for the growth and development of children.

Accurate data collection and reporting are essential for ensuring that the program can reimburse schools and institutions in a timely manner. I support revisions that reduce the burden on state agencies, School Food Authorities, and Non-Profit Child Care Institutions, provided that data integrity and program oversight are maintained. Streamlining reporting processes can help increase participation, improve efficiency, and allow staff to focus on delivering high-quality nutrition services to children.

At the same time, it is important that any reduction in data collection does not compromise the ability of FNS to monitor program trends, evaluate participation, and provide adequate oversight. Ensuring that mandatory records and applications are properly maintained is critical to preventing delays in reimbursement and maintaining compliance with federal requirements. I encourage FNS to provide clear guidance and training for state and local operators on any new reporting procedures, and to consider the unique needs of smaller or rural institutions that may face resource limitations.

Overall, I support revisions that balance reducing administrative burden with maintaining program accountability and transparency. These changes have the potential to enhance program participation and improve access to milk and other nutrient-rich foods for children in schools and child care settings. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and encourage USDA to continue seeking input from nutrition professionals, school operators, and community stakeholders as this information collection is updated.

Sincerely,
Emma Zid