

I am writing to express serious concern about [City/Town]'s unjustified decision to force [vegan/vegetarian] meals on growing children. Forcing children to forego meat in school meals is unhealthy, unscientific, and unethical. As a citizen, taxpayer, and parent, I urge the [city/town] to reverse this harmful decision, based on the following facts.

Nutrient-dense meat is critical for kids' healthy diets

High quality protein and other critical minerals best (and sometimes only) found in meat are necessary for children's growing bodies and brains. To get the same amount of protein found in a small serving of lean beef (4-ounces), students would need to eat three quarters of a pound of kidney beans plus a cup of rice, consuming more than six times the calories and more than 100g of empty carbs.

There is no evidence that removing meat from kids' diets improves health. In fact, vegan and vegetarian diets result in nutrient deficiencies that may have dire consequences for children's growth and development. Only one [randomized controlled trial \(RCT\)](#) - the gold standard in scientific evidence - has been conducted to examine the effect of meat in kids' diets. The study found that including additional meat in the diets of food insecure children improved growth, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes compared to kids who received no additional food and even compared to those who were given more calories or kids who received only extra milk.

Nutrient-dense meat is part of environmentally sustainable diets

Despite frequent and often dogmatic mischaracterizations, nutrient-dense meat that is a cornerstone in healthy diets can also be produced sustainably and indeed with benefits to the environment.

There is no strong evidence that reducing or eliminating animal-sourced foods would have a meaningful impact on greenhouse gas emissions or could be achieved without damaging people's health. In fact, [one study](#) found that if everyone in the United States were vegan, U.S. emissions would decrease by a minuscule 2.5%, while Americans would eat more calories and more carbohydrates and suffer from more nutrient deficiencies.

Of course, all food has an environmental impact. However, ultra-processed, plant-based meat alternatives can have substantially [higher GHG emissions](#) than animal-sourced foods and, as explained above, do not have the same nutrition benefits. The carbon footprint of fresh produce is highly impacted by [perishability and transportation](#), which also contribute to high food waste rates for fresh produce. According to the UN, fresh produce is more than [twice as likely to be wasted](#) as meat.

Broad brush claims about meat and the environment also often ignore the many environmental benefits of livestock production (such as eating food that would otherwise go to waste, making use of non-arable land that cannot grow crops, improving soil health, and providing natural fertilizer for farmers).

Restricting meat in children's diets is unethical

[City/Town]'s decision to unjustifiably restrict meat in school meals is not only unhealthy and unscientific, it is unethical. It will put children's health and development at risk, and the worst impact will be on economically disadvantaged and food insecure children who most rely on schools for the nutrition they need.

In a country where 70% of people are overweight or obese, many on the verge of type 2 diabetes, our city's children do not need more calories and more carbohydrates, they need more nutrient-dense food like wholesome meat. Passing off personal or political dogma as fact and ignoring the actual evidence is irresponsible and harmful.

I ask [city/town] leaders to put nutrient-dense meat, dairy, and eggs back on the menu and focus on ensuring that school meals offer nutrient-dense whole foods that support kids' healthy bodies, brains, and futures.