

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr., Chairman
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable John Hoeven, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry, Ranking Member
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairwoman
Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro, Chairwoman
House Labor, Health and Human Services
Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Ranking Member
Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
House Labor, Health and Human Services
Appropriations Subcommittee

RE: Improving Public Health with the Implementation of the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans: FY22 Budget and Appropriations Priorities

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Hoeven, Ranking Member Fortenberry, Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Blunt, and Ranking Member Cole:

As your committees consider Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations for their respective agencies, we respectfully request additional investment in the implementation of the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (Dietary Guidelines)* with the aim of reducing diet-related health disparities and supporting healthy eating for all people.

The *Dietary Guidelines* is the nation's leading set of science-based nutrition recommendations aimed at supporting public health and preventing chronic disease. The *Dietary Guidelines* is a critical tool for health professionals, policymakers, and administrators of federal food and nutrition programs serving millions of kids, parents, seniors, veterans, and other members of the general public each day. More than 60 percent of adults are now living with one or more chronic diseases, many of which are caused in part by poor diets; such diseases are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States and account for trillions of dollars in healthcare spending each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, diet-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes may also increase risk for severe illness resulting from COVID-19, amplifying the potential public health costs of the pandemic and exacerbating existing health disparities.

The National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 (NNMRRRA) institutionalized the *Dietary Guidelines*, along with directives for the prioritization and coordination of nutrition research and related policy across the federal government. Yet more than 30 years later, the full intent and impact of these directives have not been realized. Investments in nutrition research have remained stagnant for decades, leading to ongoing research gaps, and coordination across federal agencies remains inconsistent while rates of diet-related disease and health disparities continue to climb. Greater investment in the development and implementation of the *Dietary Guidelines* is imperative to ensure that national dietary guidance produces measurable improvements in population health and effectively addresses health disparities and other social and environmental challenges embedded in the US food system.

Informed by deep expertise in nutrition science, medicine, and public health, the organizations named below call on Congress to:

1. Fund an education campaign for consumers and health care professionals for the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (\$6 million).

For the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to achieve their intended reach and impact, the federal government must invest in educating consumers and health care professionals. The USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) and the HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) should work jointly to develop materials for comprehensive education campaigns aimed at: 1) educating consumers on how to use the new Dietary Guidelines to inform their dietary choices, and 2) educating health care professionals to enhance and align their dietary guidance with the new Guidelines.

The campaign should be informed by scientific research on health behavior change, as well as input from diverse key stakeholder groups, including nutrition assistance program participants and administrators, health care providers, community leaders, and health and nutrition advocates. The campaign should also incorporate educational materials representing a diversity of cultural food preferences, recognize the role of social determinants of health, and include materials in languages that meet the needs of populations at greatest risk for diet-related disease.

2. Support strategic planning and coordination of federal nutrition research priorities by codifying the Office of Nutrition Research’s move into the NIH Office of the Director and reconvening the Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research.

The Dietary Guidelines process should be viewed as a continuous cycle that includes strategic decision-making regarding research done across the federal government to develop the evidence base that serves as the foundation for the Guidelines. Human nutrition research is conducted by many agencies and departments across the federal government. Ensuring that priorities are aligned and coordinated across agencies requires appropriate infrastructure for strategic planning and coordination, including:

- a) Codifying into law the National Institutes of Health Office of Nutrition Research (ONR). The ONR was recently moved to the NIH Office of the Director to recognize the importance and relevance of nutrition research in identifying emerging scientific opportunities to meet rising public health challenges. However, without codification, ONR could be relocated again without congressional input.
- b) Reconvening the Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research (ICHNR) to develop a new National Nutrition Research Roadmap. The ICHNR, convened by USDA and HHS, brings together human nutrition research experts from across the federal government to identify research priorities and describe the role of the constituent agencies and departments in addressing those priorities. The current National Nutrition Research Roadmap expires at the end of 2021.

3. Request a US Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on implementation of the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans across federal agencies.

The NNMARRA states that *Dietary Guidelines* should be “promoted by each federal agency in carrying out any federal food, nutrition, or health program,” yet to date there has been no comprehensive effort to document or enforce adherence. The recent completion of the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provides a timely opportunity to study how federal agencies promote and implement the recommendations, as well as how the research gaps identified by the Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee are translated to federal funding opportunities. Questions to be answered include:

- a) How do federal research agencies that have a human food or nutrition research portfolio act on the research gaps identified by the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee in the scientific report?
- b) To what degree are the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* being implemented in federal food, nutrition and health programs across all federal agencies?
- c) How much is spent by each agency to implement the 2020-2025 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*?

Thank you for your careful consideration of these requests.

Signed,

National Organizations

1,000 Days

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Advocates for Better Children's Diets

American Academy of PAs

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Heart Association

American Institute for Cancer Research

American Public Health Association

American Society for Nutrition

American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA)

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Balanced

BPC Action

Center for Communications, Health and the Environment

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Common Threads

Defeat Malnutrition Today

Earthjustice

Health Care Without Harm

Healthcare Leadership Council

Institute of Food Technologists

LunchAssist

Meals on Wheels America

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Athletic Trainers' Association

National League for Nursing

National Parent Teacher Association

National WIC Association

Save the Children Action Network (SCAN)

Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior

The Gerontological Society of America

The Obesity Society

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Union of Concerned Scientists

State and Local Organizations and Academic Institutions

Caregivers Kitchen

Ehrens Consulting

Foodshed Alliance

Franklin County Local Food Council

Healthy Community Action Team Arlington

Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition

Massachusetts Councils on Aging

Meals on Wheels Orange County (CA)

Monroe County Meals on Wheels, Inc.

Neighborly Care Network

Solutions for Breastfeeding

Texas Center for Local Food