



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*

December 15, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young  
Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Room 252  
Washington DC 20504

Dear Ms. Young:

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) requests that the Biden-Harris administration propose an urgent \$2 billion nutrition science initiative in the President's Fiscal Year 2023 budget. The increase is needed to address findings that two-thirds of COVID-19 hospitalizations are due to four diet-related conditions: obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart failure. The 2021 US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, *Chronic Health Conditions: Federal Strategy Needed to Coordinate Diet-Related Efforts*, highlights that individuals with diet-related diseases are 12 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than those without diet-related diseases. Poor quality diets were a leading driver of poor health, rising health costs, and a barrier to military readiness prior to COVID-19. These new diet and COVID-19 findings underscore the tremendous impact that nutrition has on public health and the economy. Immediate action is needed so that the current negative trends of poor nutrition on public health can be reversed.

Diet and nutrition are highly important factors throughout the life course in determining health. According to the GAO report, 42% of, or approximately 100 million, US adults have obesity, with diet-related diseases including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes accounting for half of the deaths in the US each year. Diet-related conditions impact the economy and military eligibility. Government spending, including Medicare and Medicaid, to treat cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes accounted for 54% of the \$383.6 billion in health care spending, a 30% increase from 2009 to 2018. Thirty percent of young people do not qualify for military service because of their weight. The GAO report notes that a federal strategy for diet-related efforts could result in improved, cost-effective outcomes for reducing Americans' risk of diet-related chronic health conditions.

With these enormous challenges and implications for public health and the economy in mind, ASN believes that the nation's strategy should include a substantial investment in nutrition science across all federal agencies. Specifically, ASN requests a doubling of the \$2 billion current investment in nutrition science by the federal government at agencies including the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Food and Drug Administration, US Department of Agriculture, and others. This enhanced support should be coordinated by a revitalized Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research, given the staff and budget resources needed to align all agencies to focus on nutrition support and

coordination across the federal government. Given nutrition's inherently interdisciplinary nature, an ongoing, strong coordinating mechanism across all government agencies is essential as the GAO recommended in order to achieve the many promising opportunities in nutrition. An increase in nutrition research support will propel efforts to recruit cutting-edge nutrition scientists to the federal agencies and to train the next generation of nutrition scientists and practitioners, and will usher in new initiatives to enhance and improve nutrition, which will have profound effects on the health of all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of this request for an investment of an additional \$2 billion in nutrition science across all federal agencies. Please keep ASN in mind as a resource to you in future discussions related to nutrition, as well as implementation of the White House Conference on Nutrition. ASN is a not-for-profit, professional scientific society dedicated to bringing together the world's top researchers to advance the science, education, and practice of nutrition. ASN has more than 8,000 members around the world, working throughout government, clinical practice, academia, and industry, to conduct research in order to achieve the ASN vision of "A Healthier World Through Evidence-Based Nutrition". Please feel free to contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., ASN Chief Executive Officer, at 240-428-3643 or [jcourtney@nutrition.org](mailto:jcourtney@nutrition.org) with any questions or requests for additional information.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Coates", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Coates, Ph.D.  
ASN President, 2021-2022

cc: Susan Rice, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy  
Bruce Reed, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Eric Lander, President's Science Advisor and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy