

April 28, 2022

Re: Outside Witness Testimony from Paul M. Coates, Ph.D., on behalf of the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) prepared for the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies regarding National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/ NCHS) Fiscal Year 2023 funding.

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 appropriations. **The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully requests at least \$49.048 billion dollars for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$210 million dollars for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/ NCHS) in FY 2023.** ASN is dedicated to bringing together the world's top researchers to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition, and has more than 8,000 members working throughout academia, clinical practice, government, and industry.

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

The NIH is the nation's premier sponsor of biomedical research and is the agency responsible for conducting and supporting the largest percentage of federally funded basic and clinical nutrition research with \$3.2 billion in nutrition and obesity research in FY 2021. Although nutrition and obesity research make up only about five percent of the NIH budget, some of the most promising nutrition-related research discoveries have been made possible by NIH support. NIH nutrition-related discoveries have impacted the way clinicians prevent and treat heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Nevertheless, healthcare costs and risk factors for diet-related diseases remain high. In fact, from 2019 to 2020, age-adjusted death rates rose 4.1% for heart disease, 4.9% for stroke, 8.7% for Alzheimer disease, and 14.8% for diabetes¹. With additional support for

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db427.htm>

NIH, additional breakthroughs and discoveries to improve the health of all Americans and reduce the economic burden of diet-related diseases will be made possible.

Investment in biomedical research generates new knowledge, improved health, and leads to innovation and long-term economic growth. **ASN recommends at least \$49.048 billion dollars for the NIH base budget in FY 2023** to support NIH nutrition-related research that will lead to important disease prevention and cures. This represents an increase of \$4.1 billion over the comparable FY 2022 funding level (an increase of \$3.5 billion or 7.9% in the NIH appropriation plus funding from the 21st Century Cures Act for specific initiatives). ASN requests that any funding for the new Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) supplement our \$49 billion recommendation for NIH's base budget, rather than supplant the essential foundational investment in the NIH.

A budget of \$49 billion will allow NIH to provide adequate support for the NIH Common Fund's Nutrition for Precision Health, powered by the All of Us Research Program, while still providing much needed increases to other parts of the portfolio. ASN strongly supports the President's budget proposal of \$97 million for the NIH Office of Nutrition Research to advance nutrition science. This is an increase of \$96 million above FY 2022 enacted to promote health and reduce the burden of diet-related diseases. By centrally coordinating implementation of the Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research, the Office of Nutrition Research can support cross-cutting NIH nutrition research developed in collaboration with Institutes and Centers that already fund nutrition research. Increased support for nutrition research will provide solutions ensuring nutrition security and access to healthy food to prevent diet-related health disparities and promote health equity for a variety of diet-related diseases and conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, and cancer. The complexity of human nutrition demands that cutting edge data science and system science methods be employed to move this field forward. Funds will support new training programs in Artificial Intelligence for Precision Nutrition that will focus on integration of related domains, including machine learning, systems biology, systems science, Big Data, and computational analytics to tackle complex biomedical challenges in nutrition science. NIH needs sustainable and predictable budget growth to fulfill the full potential of biomedical research, including nutrition research, that is aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of all Americans, as well as global populations.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics (CDC NCHS)

The National Center for Health Statistics, housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the nation's principal health statistics agency. **ASN recommends a FY 2023 funding level of \$210 million dollars for NCHS** to help ensure uninterrupted collection of vital health and nutrition statistics and help cover the costs needed for technology and information security maintenance and upgrades that are necessary to replace aging survey infrastructure. The U.S. is a leader in this area but more than a

decade of flat funding has taken a significant toll on NCHS's ability to keep pace. \$210 million reflects an increase to NCHS's base budget of \$30 million from its FY 2022 appropriation, reversing a decade of sequestration and restoring the program to its FY 2010 funding level, adjusted for inflation.

The NCHS provides critical data on all aspects of our health care system, and it is responsible for monitoring the nation's health and nutrition status through surveys such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), that serve as a gold standard for data collection around the world. Nutrition and health data, largely collected through NHANES, are essential for tracking the nutrition, health and well-being of the American population, and are especially important for observing nutritional and health trends in our nation's children. This is an invaluable source of data that has been and can continue to be used to address major health issues as they arise. The U.S. Department of Agriculture uses this data to develop nutrition policies that guide multibillion dollar federal food assistance programs, and nutrition researchers use this valuable data as well.

Nutrition monitoring conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture/ Agricultural Research Service is a unique and critically important surveillance function in which dietary intake, nutritional status, and health status are evaluated in a rigorous and standardized manner. Nutrition monitoring is an inherently governmental function and findings are essential for multiple government agencies, as well as the public and private sector. Nutrition monitoring is essential to track what Americans are eating, inform nutrition and dietary guidance policy, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of nutrition assistance programs, and study nutrition-related disease outcomes. Funds are needed to ensure the continuation of this critical surveillance of the nation's nutritional status and the many benefits it provides.

Through learning both what Americans eat and how their diets directly affect their health, the NCHS is able to monitor the prevalence of obesity and other chronic diseases in the U.S. and track the performance of preventive interventions, as well as assess 'nutrients of concern' such as calcium, iron, folate, iodine, vitamin D, and other micronutrients which are consumed in inadequate amounts by many subsets of our population. Data such as these are critical to guide policy development in health and nutrition, including food safety, food labeling, food assistance, military rations and dietary guidance. For example, NHANES data are used to determine funding levels for programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics, which provide nourishment to low-income women and children. Additional support would enable collection of more data on underrepresented groups, such as pregnant and lactating women, and assessment of nutritional status indicators for nutrients on which we have no, or inadequate, information.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2023 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health and the CDC/ National Center for Health Statistics. Please contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., ASN Executive Officer, at 9211 Corporate Boulevard, Suite 300, Rockville, Maryland 20850, jcourtney@nutrition.org or 240-428-3650, if ASN may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,
Paul M. Coates, Ph.D.
2021-2022 President, American Society for Nutrition