



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

April 13, 2023

Re: Outside Witness Testimony from Martha A. Belury, PhD, RDN 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 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ National Center for Health Statistics Fiscal Year 2024 funding.

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

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

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations. **The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully requests at least \$50.924 billion dollars for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$215 million dollars for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/ NCHS) in FY 2024.** 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 \$3.273 billion in nutrition and obesity research in FY 2022. Nutrition research and training has been funded at approximately 5% of total NIH obligations since FY 2015, although 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. Yet according to the recently released [NIH Nutrition Research Report 2020-2021](#), funding levels for NIH-supported nutrition research and training have been flat for many years. Recently, due to inflation and other factors, support for nutrition research has actually declined - all while healthcare costs and risk factors for diet-related diseases remain high. From 2020 to 2021, age-adjusted death rates

rose 3.3% for heart disease, 5.9% for stroke, and 2.4% for diabetes¹. With additional support for 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 \$50.924 billion for NIH base budget in FY 2024**, a \$3.465 billion increase over the comparable FY 2023 program level, would allow NIH to accelerate progress in the NIH Common Fund's Nutrition for Precision Health, powered by the *All of Us* Research Program, and can include the President's budget request for the NIH Office of Nutrition Research to be funded at \$121.3 million. \$50.924 billion provides a five percent increase across all NIH institutes and centers.

A budget of \$50.924 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 also specifically requests that **at least \$40 million be allocated to the Office of Nutrition Research (ONR) within the NIH**. The ONR has a crucial role in advancing nutrition science to promote health and reduce the burden of diet-related diseases and nutrition health disparities. ASN strongly supports the administration's FY 2024 Budget Request for the NIH ONR of \$121.3 million to advance nutrition science to support nutrition research. By centrally coordinating the implementation of the Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research, the ONR can support cross-cutting NIH nutrition research developed in collaboration with Institutes and Centers that already fund nutrition research. This funding level will provide the ONR with a strong foundation and increased capacity to carry out the following examples:

- Establish Food as Medicine Networks or Centers of Excellence to conduct implementation science, intervention, and health quality research to inform the development of more impactful health care policy that improves public health, lowers insurance costs, and expands nutrition education and training among health care providers.
- Maintain the Nutrition Science Data and Biospecimen Resources Portal, which provides datasets, biospecimens, and data analysis tools and resources to support nutrition research.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db456.htm>

- Supplement the Dietary Biomarker Development Consortium, which works to identify biomarkers that can serve as independent, objective markers of dietary intake and complement current dietary intake assessment methods.
- Support the Developmental Origins of Health and Disease program, to examine the role of diet, food environment, and related environmental exposures in order to answer key mechanistic questions about the developmental origins of some diseases, and ultimately lead to an optimized diet for the health of the parent and child.
- Develop specific initiatives to advance the goals of the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

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. NIH needs sustainable and predictable budget growth to fulfill the full potential of biomedical research, including nutrition research, aimed at improving the health and well-being of all Americans and 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 2024 funding level of \$215 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 NCHS has been flat funded for years, losing purchasing power while facing increased costs. A \$215 million budget would allow NCHS to keep pace with necessary survey innovations and collect information needed to monitor nutrition, public health and health care without cutting back on any major surveys such as the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

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. As such, ASN recommends that Congress direct the secretaries of USDA and HHS and other agencies as needed to engage with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to conduct a comprehensive study of NHANES including opportunities to modernize the survey methodology.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2024 appropriations for the NIH and the CDC/ NCHS. 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,
Martha A. Belury, PhD, RDN
2022-2023 President, American Society for Nutrition