



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*  
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April 25, 2011

Re: ASN Testimony to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Advocating for HHS NIH and CDC NCHS Funding

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding fiscal year (FY) 2012 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). ASN is the professional scientific society dedicated to bringing together the world's top researchers, clinical nutritionists and industry to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition to promote human and animal health. Our focus ranges from the most critical details of nutrition research to broad societal applications. **ASN respectfully requests \$35 billion for NIH, and we urge you to adopt the President's request of \$162 million for NCHS in FY 2012.**

Basic and applied research on nutrition, nutrient composition, the relationship between nutrition and chronic disease, and nutrition monitoring are critical to the health of all Americans and the U.S. economy. Awareness of the growing epidemic of obesity and the contribution of chronic illness to burgeoning health care costs has highlighted the need for improved information on dietary components, dietary intake, strategies for dietary change and nutritional therapies. The health costs of obesity alone are estimated at \$147 billion each year. This enormous health and economic burden is largely preventable, along with the many other chronic diseases that plague the U.S. It is for this reason that we urge you to consider these recommended funding levels for two agencies under the Department of Health and Human Services that have profound effects on nutrition research, nutrition monitoring, and the health of all Americans—the National Institutes of Health and the National Center for Health Statistics.

### **National Institutes of Health**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is responsible for conducting and supporting 90 percent (approximately \$1 billion) of federally-funded basic and clinical nutrition research. Nutrition research, which makes up about four percent of the NIH budget, is truly a trans-NIH endeavor, being conducted and funded across multiple Institutes and Centers. In order to fulfill the full potential of biomedical research, including nutrition research, **ASN recommends an FY 2012 funding level of \$35 billion for the agency**, a modest increase over the current funding level of \$34 billion (including supplemental appropriations). This increase is necessary to maintain both the existing and future scientific infrastructure. Although the discovery process produces tremendous value, it often takes a lengthy and unpredictable path. Economic stagnation is disruptive to training, careers, long range projects and ultimately to progress. NIH needs sustainable and predictable budget growth to achieve the full promise

of medical research to improve the health and longevity of all Americans and continue our nation's dominance in this area.

NIH and its grantees have played a major role in the growth of knowledge that has led to an unprecedented number of scientific breakthroughs that have transformed our understanding of human health, helping Americans to live longer, healthier and more productive lives. Many of these discoveries are nutrition-related and have impacted the way clinicians prevent and treat heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other chronic diseases. By 2030 the number of Americans age 65 and older is expected to grow to 72 million, and the incidence of chronic disease will also grow. Sustained support for nutrition research is required if we are to successfully confront the health care challenges associated with an older population.

### **CDC National Center for Health Statistics**

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is the nation's principal health statistics agency. 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). Nutrition and health data are essential for tracking the nutrition, health and well being of the American public, especially for observing nutritional and health trends in our nation's children. 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 consumption of 'nutrients of concern' such as Vitamin D and calcium. Data such as these are critical to guide policy development in the area of health and nutrition.

To continue support for the agency and its important mission, **ASN recommends an FY 2012 funding level of \$162 million for the agency.** Flat and decreased funding levels threaten the collection of this important information, most notably vital statistics and the NHANES. Moreover, nearly 30 percent of the funding for NHANES comes from other federal agencies such as the NIH and the USDA Agricultural Research Service. When these agencies face flat budgets or worse, budget cuts, they withdraw much-needed support for NHANES, placing this valuable resource in peril. Sustained funding for NCHS can help to ensure uninterrupted collection of vital health and nutrition statistics.

Thank you for your support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding fiscal year 2012 appropriations. Please contact Sarah Ohlhorst, MS, RD, Director of Government Relations, if ASN may provide further assistance. *She can be reached at address: 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda MD 20814; telephone number: 301.634.7281 or email address: sohlhorst@nutrition.org.*

Sincerely,



Robert M. Russell, MD  
President, American Society for Nutrition