



American Society for Nutrition  
*Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice*  
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March 14, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education  
and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

Re: American Society for Nutrition Testimony to Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Regarding FY 2013 Funding for  
the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National  
Center for Health Statistics

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding fiscal year (FY) 2013 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Founded in 1928, ASN is a nonprofit scientific society with more than 4,500 members in academia, clinical practice, government and industry. **ASN respectfully requests \$32 billion for the National Institutes of Health, and we urge you to adopt the President's request of \$162 million for the National Center for Health Statistics in FY 2013.**

Basic and applied nutrition research on the relationship between nutrition and chronic disease, nutrient composition, and nutrition monitoring are critical for 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 the nation's premier sponsor of biomedical research and is the agency responsible for conducting and supporting 86 percent (approximately \$1.4 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. Some of the most promising nutrition-related research discoveries have been made possible by NIH support. In order to fulfill the full potential of biomedical research, including nutrition research, **ASN recommends an FY 2013 funding level of \$32 billion for the NIH**, a modest increase over the current funding level of \$30.64 billion.

The modest increase we recommend is necessary to maintain both the existing and future scientific infrastructure. The discovery process—while it produces tremendous value—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. It is imperative that we continue our commitment to biomedical research and continue our nation's dominance in this area by making the NIH a national priority.

Over the past 50 years, NIH and its grantees have played a major role in the growth of knowledge that has transformed our understanding of human health, and how to prevent and treat human disease. Because of the unprecedented number of breakthroughs and discoveries made possible by NIH funding, scientists are helping Americans to live 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 basic and clinical research is required if we are to successfully confront the health care challenges associated with an older, and potentially sicker, population.

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

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), housed within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 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), 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.

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, which are consumed in inadequate amounts by many subsets of our population. Data such as these are critical to guide policy development in the area of 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.

To continue support for the agency and its important mission, **ASN recommends an FY 2013 funding level of \$162 million for NCHS.** Sustained funding for NCHS can help to ensure uninterrupted collection of vital health and nutrition statistics, and will help to cover the costs needed for technology and information security upgrades that are necessary to replace aging survey infrastructure.

Thank you for your support of the NIH and the NCHS, and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2013 appropriations. Please contact John E. Courtney, Ph.D., Executive Officer, if ASN may provide further assistance. He can be reached at 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Maryland 20814; 301.634.7078; or [jcourtney@nutrition.org](mailto:jcourtney@nutrition.org).

Sincerely,  
Sharon Donovan, Ph.D., R.D.  
President, American Society for Nutrition