



May 19, 2014

Re: Public Witness Testimony from Gordon M. Jensen, M.D., Ph.D. on behalf of the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, 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 2015 funding.

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

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

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 appropriations. **The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully requests \$32 billion dollars for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$182 million dollars for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ National Center for Health Statistics (CDC/ NCHS) in Fiscal Year 2015.** ASN is dedicated to bringing together the world's top researchers to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition, and has more than 5,000 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 86 percent of federally-funded basic and clinical nutrition research. Although nutrition and obesity research makes up less than eight 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. For example, U.S. death rates from heart disease and stroke have decreased by more than 60 percent, and the proportion of older adults with chronic disabilities has dropped by one-third. With additional support for NIH, additional breakthroughs and discoveries to improve the health of all Americans will be made possible.

Investment in biomedical research generates new knowledge, improved health, and leads to innovation and long-term economic growth. A decade of flat-funding, followed by

sequestration cuts, has taken a significant toll on NIH's ability to support research. Such economic stagnation is disruptive to training, careers, long-range projects and ultimately to progress. Increasing the NIH budget to \$32 billion dollars would fully restore the funding that was lost to sequestration and support at least 600 additional competing research project grants. **As a first step toward sustainable growth, ASN recommends a minimum of \$32 billion dollars for NIH in Fiscal Year 2015.** NIH needs sustainable and predictable budget growth in order to fulfill the full potential of biomedical research, including nutrition research, and to improve the health of all Americans.

### **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 Fiscal Year 2015 funding level of \$182 million dollars for NCHS**, consistent with the President's budget request, 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. *More than half of NCHS's budget is supported through the evaluation tap.* Therefore, ASN does not support efforts to eliminate the evaluation tap—in part or in full—unless a viable alternative funding mechanism is put in place to continue these important functions.

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 2015 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 the opportunity to submit testimony regarding FY 2015 appropriations for the National Institutes of Health and the CDC/ National Center for Health Statistics. 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,  
Gordon M. Jensen, M.D., Ph.D.  
2013-2014 President, American Society for Nutrition