

May 17, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chair  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking  
House Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Ranking  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.  
Ranking  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural  
Development, Food and Drug  
Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Murray, Heinrich, Granger, and Harris, and Ranking Members Collins, Hoeven, DeLauro, and Bishop:

As you craft the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies spending bill, the undersigned companies and public health groups respectfully request:

- Full funding for the President's budget request for the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN), which includes \$12,000,000 for FDA's initiatives under the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health (or National Strategy);
- In addition to this funding, providing \$1,000,000 to aid the FDA in assessing progress and working with industry on meeting the short-term (2.5 year) voluntary sodium reduction targets, released after a long delay in October 2021 and which are to be

achieved by industry in 2024, and setting a timeline for establishing interim and long-term voluntary targets with accompanying report language (the FY23 omnibus provided \$1,000,000) and oppose any policy riders that block or weaken FDA's work on sodium reduction; and

- \$5,000,000 for critical technical assistance to aid schools in meeting the updated school meal nutrition standards (the FY23 omnibus provided \$2,000,000 in technical assistance) and oppose any new policy riders that block or weaken stronger nutrition standards for children.

First, CFSAN has remained under-funded for decades in its efforts to ensure the safety and transparency of the 80 percent of our nation's food supply over which it has jurisdiction. Efforts by Congress to boost funding for CFSAN over the past decade have met with some success, yet even these increases have served only to bring the food program roughly even with the number of staff it had in 1978. Meanwhile, the food industry has evolved dramatically since the 1970s, and Congress has assigned FDA more and more responsibilities, including broad new mandates over infant formula, dietary supplements, food labeling, and food safety. The FDA has requested an increase of \$106,774,000 for CFSAN (for total funding of \$509,542,000, a 17 percent increase from \$402,768,000 in FY 2023), which includes a \$12,000,000 increase to support nutrition work in alignment with the National Strategy.

Second, we urge you to provide \$1,000,000 to aid the FDA in working with industry and measuring progress on meeting the voluntary 2.5 year sodium reduction targets, and setting a timeline for establishing interim and long-term voluntary targets that would bring overall sodium levels in the food supply down to levels that help consumers meet the Dietary Guidelines, as originally intended. The FDA did not update or finalize the 2016 draft guidance on longer-term voluntary targets that would fully meet the Dietary Guidelines. Specifically, we would like the FDA to identify which data sources it will use, and how the FDA will collect and analyze data toward meeting the voluntary 2.5 year targets. Even though the targets are voluntary, meeting longer-term targets could prevent up to 475,000 cases of cardiovascular disease and save \$41 billion in healthcare costs over 20 years<sup>1</sup>, yielding health and economic benefits. The FDA should also report to Congress on these efforts. Further, the FDA should implement consumer-awareness and education campaigns on sodium reduction to help consumers make better informed choices about what they eat while encouraging companies to provide healthier food options. Lastly, we oppose any policy riders that block or weaken FDA's work on sodium reduction.

Each of the signed companies stand by the FDA in voluntary, industry-led efforts to reduce sodium in our food supply, thus demonstrating that sodium reduction is achievable. The signed public health groups also support these efforts. With a common benchmark, all companies are now encouraged to improve the nutritional value of their products. While not binding, voluntary

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<sup>1</sup> Pearson-Stuttard J, Kypridemos C, Collins B, et al. Estimating the health and economic effects of the proposed US Food and Drug Administration voluntary sodium reformulation: Microsimulation cost-effectiveness analysis. *PLoS Med.* 2018;15:e1002551. Published 2018 Apr 10. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.

targets can help support healthier alternatives for consumers while leveling the playing field for companies. These outcomes can be a win-win for consumers and industry.

Third, dedicated funding is needed to help schools meet updated nutrition standards. We were pleased that the FY23 omnibus provided \$2,000,000 in technical assistance. The USDA recently released a proposed rule to strengthen nutrition standards consistent with the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (“Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans”). The rule proposes, for the first time, to reduce added sugars, with product-based limits for the top sources of added sugars beginning School Year 2025-2026, and to phase into a limit of added sugars averaged over the week beginning School Year 2027-2028. Further, sodium reduction is paramount to protect children’s health: nine out of ten children consume too much sodium, putting them at risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease into adulthood. The USDA proposes new, gradual 10-percent sodium reduction levels every two school years for breakfast (through School Year 2027-2028) and lunch (through School Year 2029-2030). The USDA also maintains at least 80 percent of the weekly grains offered are whole grain-rich. Further, we must preserve and build on the progress schools and the food industry have made over the past decade to meet science-based nutrition standards and strongly oppose any new policy riders blocking or weakening implementation of stronger nutrition standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Sustainable Food Policy Alliance, including  
member companies Danone North America,  
Mars, Incorporated, Nestlé USA and  
Unilever United States

American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
Center for Science in the Public Interest