



March 28, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman Granger, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We appreciate your leadership on appropriations and your efforts to ensure funding for agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We write to encourage you to support critical funding for the NIH's Office of Nutrition Research (ONR) as you work with your colleagues to finalize FY 2025 appropriations.

Poor diet is a leading cause of death in the U.S. and has been linked to over 500,000 deaths per year.¹ The rates of diet-related disease among adults in the U.S. are abysmal: over 70% have overweight or obesity;² about 50% have diabetes or prediabetes;³ and over 90% have suboptimal cardiometabolic health, characterized by excess weight; high blood glucose, blood pressure, or lipids (or taking medications for any of these conditions); or a history of cardiovascular disease.⁴ Moreover, the direct medical costs and loss of productivity associated with excess weight and diet-related disease is estimated to be almost \$1 trillion annually.⁵ And that's before the advent of the new, hugely expensive diet drugs.

Nutrition science is evolving, with a rapidly expanding toolkit of interventions and methods. Although research on the prevention of diet-related chronic diseases has produced important gains in knowledge, it has not been sufficient to stem increasing rates of these conditions. The burden is not likely to lessen anytime soon and there is much that scientists still need to learn.

To ensure that nutrition guidance and policies rest on a secure evidence base, nutrition research must be fully funded and optimally coordinated. The NIH is the largest funder of nutrition research in the U.S., spending over \$2 billion on nutrition research and training in 2021.⁶ However, nutrition research makes up only roughly 5% of all spending at the NIH and has remained at that level since 2015.^{6,7}

The NIH's ONR within the Office of the Director is essential to advancing nutrition science because it identifies and coordinates nutrition research priorities to leadership across the NIH's institutes and centers and with other federal agencies.⁸ The ONR is currently funded at \$1.3 million⁹ but needs additional funding to continue and expand its support for innovative and well-designed nutrition research.

We urge you to provide the ONR with \$121 million for FY 2025 to support the office's 2020-2030 Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research,¹⁰ the implementation of recommendations of the 2022 National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health,¹¹ and coordination of nutrition research across the NIH's 27 institutes and centers and with other federal agencies.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or a request for further discussion.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Rogus, PhD, RDN
Campaign Manager, Scientific Integrity
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Peter Lurie, MD, MPH
President
Center for Science in the Public Interest

¹ The U.S. Burden of Disease Collaborators. The State of U.S. Health, 1990-2016: Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Among U.S. States. *JAMA*. 2018;319(14):1444-1472.

² Fryar CD, Carroll MD, Afful J, et al. *Prevalence of Overweight, Obesity, and Severe Obesity Among Adults Aged 20 and Over: United States, 1960-1962 Through 2017-2018*. 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/obesity-adult-17-18/obesity-adult.htm>. Accessed February 27, 2024.

³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics Report: Estimates of Diabetes and Its Burden in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/data/statistics-report/index.html>. Accessed February 27, 2024.

⁴ O'Hearn M, Lauren BN, Wong JB, et al. Trends and Disparities in Cardiometabolic Health Among U.S. Adults, 1999-2018. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2022;80(2):138-151.

⁵ The Rockefeller Foundation. *True Cost of Food: Measuring What Matters to Transform the U.S. Food System*. 2021. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/True-Cost-of-Food-Full-Report-Final.pdf>. Accessed February 27, 2024.

⁶ U.S. National Institutes of Health. *Nutrition Research Report, 2020-2021*. https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/NIH_Nutrition-Research-Report_RF508_FV-05.pdf. Accessed February 27, 2024.

⁷ U.S. National Institutes of Health. *NIH Nutrition Research Report, 2017-2019*. https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/NIH%20Nutrition%20Research%20Report%202017-2019%20FINAL%20MERGED_508.pdf. Accessed February 27, 2024.

⁸ U.S. National Institutes of Health. Office of Nutrition Research (ONR). <https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/onr>. Accessed February 27, 2024.

⁹ U.S. National Institutes of Health Office of the Director. *Congressional Justification FY 2024*. <https://officeofbudget.od.nih.gov/pdfs/FY24/ics/OD%20FY%202024%20CJ%20Chapter-508.pdf>. Accessed February 27, 2024.

¹⁰ U.S. National Institutes of Health. *2020-2030 Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research: A Report of the NIH Nutrition Research Task Force*.

https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2020NutritionStrategicPlan_508.pdf. Accessed March 7, 2024.

¹¹ The White House. Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. 2022.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/White-House-National-Strategy-on-Hunger-Nutrition-and-Health-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed March 7, 2024.