

June 12, 2025

Dr. Jayanta Bhattacharya, Director
US National Institutes of Health

Dear Dr. Bhattacharya,

There is an urgent need for rigorous, independent, objective nutrition science that explains the role of American food and our diet in obesity and cardiometabolic diseases and what to do about it. We have the shortest lifespans of the world's wealthy nations, more than half of American adults have at least one diet-related disease, and our children are sick with food-caused chronic disease. More than twenty percent have obesity, over 30 percent have type 2 or pre-diabetes, and the fastest growing rates of fatty liver disease, until recently unthinkable in children. More Americans die each day from chronic food illness than die in a year of acute food illness which today is the overwhelming focus of U.S. food safety programs. All told, the economic cost of nutrition-related chronic diseases has been estimated at \$16 trillion over the period from 2011 to 2020. As America faces this urgent diet-related crisis, we are reassured that some federal officials are encouraging NIH to uncover its root causes and to find solutions.

As leading scientists in the field of nutrition and health, speaking in our personal capacities, we urge that you use your leadership to defend our ability to openly discuss and debate scientific controversies in our field, without political filtering, censorship or intimidation. Our NIH colleagues need the freedom to present their findings in scientific meetings without political oversight, and to author and co-author freely in the scientific literature, including through journal commentaries and editorials. Scientific independence and freedom of inquiry is the only way to maintain the credibility of federally funded research. NIH is the leading medical science institution in the world. American taxpayers deserve to know, and trust, what we are learning from their investment.

Considering the urgent food-caused health crisis in America, we further urge you to adequately invest in the full spectrum of nutrition research with the rigor and reproducibility needed to meet our current moment. This includes bench research on the biological mechanisms of diet-related disease, brain and sensory science, microbiome research, toxicological studies, human metabolic research, clinical intervention research, epidemiological studies, prevention science, regulatory science, and translational research to support population health. We ask that you: 1) provide \$120 million to the NIH Office of Nutrition Research, 2) create a state-of-the-art research environment for highly controlled human studies to obtain results at a scale and pace that answers key questions in months, not years, 3) adequately fund nutrition science by doubling the current NIH nutrition budget to \$4 billion, and 4) create an institutional home for this research in a National Institute of Nutrition.

We ask that you publicly affirm your commitment to independent science at NIH, free from political interference. And we urge you to increase federal investments in nutrition research that can give the American public answers and solutions to this country's vexing problem of diet-related chronic disease.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Schmidt, PhD, MSW, MPH
School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco

Christopher Gardner, PhD
School of Medicine
Stanford University

Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH
Nutrition, Food Studies & Public Health
New York University

Barry M. Popkin, PhD
W.R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of Nutrition
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

James Krieger, MD, MPH
School of Public Health
University of Washington

Jerold Mande, MPH
Founder & CEO
Nourish Science

Joshua Drake, PhD
Department of Human Nutrition, Foods & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Kevin Hall, PhD
Former, National Institutes of Health

Tera Fazzino, PhD
Center for Addition Research & Treatment
University of Kansas

Christina Economos, PhD
Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy
Tufts University

Dariusz Mozaffarian, MD, DrPH
Food is Medicine Institute
Tufts University

Ashley Gearhardt, PhD
Department of Psychology
University of Michigan

Ronit Ridberg, PhD
Food is Medicine Institute
Tufts University

Robert Lustig MD
Division of Endocrinology
University of California San Francisco

Deirdre K. Tobias, ScD
School of Medicine
Brigham and Women's Hospital

Eric Rimm, ScD
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Brigham and Women's Hospital

Steve Gortmaker, PhD
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Meir Stampfer, DrPH, MD
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Rodney Gaines, PhD, MS
Department of Human Nutrition, Food & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Elaina Marinik, PhD
Department of Human Nutrition, Foods & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Lindsey Smith Taillie, PhD
Department of Nutrition
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Jonathan Q Purnell, MD
Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes & Clinical Nutrition
Oregon Health & Science University

Catherine E. Woteki, PhD
Biocomplexity Institute
University of Virginia

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

Gerardo G. Mackenzie, PhD
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Aviva Musicus, ScD
Department of Nutrition
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Science Director
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Marlene Schwartz, PhD
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health
University of Connecticut

Michael F. Jacobson, PhD
Founder and Nutrition Activist
National Food Museum

Laurie Jacobs, PhD
Institute for Health Policy Studies, School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco

Folami Ideraabdullah, PhD
Department of Genetics
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Matthew Ulgherait, PhD
Department of Cell Biology and Physiology
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Leslie Lytle, PhD, RD
Department of Health Behavior
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Molly De Marco, PhD
Department of Nutrition
Gillings School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Mary Hearst, PhD, MPH
School of Nursing
University of Minnesota

Ryan M Kane, MD, MPH
Food is Medicine Institute
Tufts University

Jeffrey B. Blumberg, PhD
Food is Medicine Institute
Tufts University

Sean B. Cash, PhD
Food is Medicine Institute
Tufts University

James Roake, MS
Institute for Health Policy Studies
University of California, San Francisco

Rachel Radin, PhD
School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco

Charles Brenner, PhD
Diabetes and Cancer Metabolism
Beckman Research Institute, City of Hope

Kevin Davy, PhD
Department of Human Nutrition, Food & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Spencer Nadolsky, DO
Founder/CEO
Vineyard Health

Rachel M. Radin, PhD
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
University of California, San Francisco

Dongmin Liu, PhD
Department of Human Nutrition, Food & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Shu Wen Ng, PhD
Department of Nutrition, School of Global Public Health
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

M. Andra Azcarate-Peril, PhD
School of Medicine
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Sarah Lessard, PhD
Department of Human Nutrition, Food & Exercise
Virginia Tech

Chris Gentile, PhD
Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition
Colorado State University

Yingfeng Deng, PhD
Diabetes and Metabolism Research Institute
City of Hope

Junco Warren, PhD
Department of Biological Systems Engineering
Virginia Tech

Paul M. Coates, Ph.D.
School of Public Health
Indiana University

Sally Rockey, PhD
Founder & President
Rockey Consulting

Kevin Schalinske, PhD
Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition
Iowa State University

Martha A. Belury, PhD, RDN
Department of Food Science & Technology
Ohio State University

Alyssa J. Moran, ScD, MPH, RD
Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania

Christina A. Roberto, PhD
Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania

Zhen Bouman Chen, PhD
Department of Diabetes Complications & Metabolism
City of Hope

John Gershman, PhD
Robert F Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University

Henry S. Kahn, MD, FACP, FAHA
School of Medicine
Emory University

Dennis Savaiano, PhD
Department of Nutrition Science
Purdue University

Roopa Kalyanaraman Marcello, DrPH, MPH
Freelance Public Health Strategist

DeAnna Nara, PhD
Campaign Manager
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Diana Nelson Loudon, MS
Life Science Librarian
University of Washington

Carla Giacomazzi, FNP-C
Prenatal, GYN & Diabetes Coordinator
Inner City Health

Stephanie McCulloch, MS, MPH
Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Harvard T.H Chan School of Public Health

Christopher Duggan, MD, MPH
Division of Nutrition
Harvard Medical School

Christine P. Stewart, PhD, MPH
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Marjorie Haskell PhD, MPH
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Jennifer T. Smilowitz, PhD
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Amy R. Nichols, PhD, MS, RDN
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Naima Moustaid-Moussa, PhD, DFASN, FTOS, FAHA, FNAI
Institute for One health Innovation
Texas Tech University and Texas Tech Health Sciences Center

K. Ryan Wessells, PhD
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Keith P. West, Jr., DrPH
Bloomberg School of Public Health
Johns Hopkins University

Sonja Y. Hess, PhD, MSc
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis

Angela M. Zivkovic, PhD
Department of Nutrition
University of California, Davis