

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,

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