



Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

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May 24, 2021

First Lady Jill Biden, EdD
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Dr. Biden:

As president of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, I would like to thank you for your dedication to cancer research, education and military families. Good nutrition plays a role in each of these areas and I am writing to offer our support and expertise in helping you achieve your vision and goals as First Lady and in the Biden administration. The Academy has sent communications to the Biden administration in support of policies that will positively impact the health of communities across the country; we are happy to extend our health and nutrition expertise to your office as well.

Representing more than 112,000 credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, working on the front lines of food and nutrition care in the United States and around the world. The Academy has specialty practitioners in all areas of health care and education, including cancer, education of the public, women's health, educators of health professionals and much more.

Registered dietitian nutritionists work closely with cancer patients to provide nutrition counseling during their road to recovery and help them navigate food choices that will boost their overall treatment. In February 2021, the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* published an [article](#) which highlighted the barriers cancer survivors face in maintaining a healthy diet, as well as the role nutrition may play in cancer risk and treatment. Key takeaways included: cancer survivors are at high risk for poor diet quality, particularly among individuals who have less education and are categorized as overweight; there is an impaired taste function consistently reported with radiotherapy treatment for cancer; breast cancer survivors face barriers to eating a healthy diet and staying physically fit; a Mediterranean style diet may reduce overall cancer risk for women, but not for men; and more. While more work remains to be done to gain deeper insight into nutritional counseling's role in treatment for cancer patients, as well as cancer risk, science continues to show the importance of strong nutrition in preventing diet-related chronic diseases like cancer.

Increased access to and strong nutrition standards for child nutrition programs such as WIC and school meals remain one of the Academy's top policy priorities. As an educator yourself, you understand that nutritious school meals are just as important to students as books and pencils, and studies have shown that healthy students are better learners. Ensuring all children have

access to healthful food throughout the school year, as well as during summer break, is another avenue to fostering health equity. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and reported increase in the prevalence of childhood obesity it is critical to focus on establishing healthy eating habits at a young age. The Academy continues to advocate for legislation like the Universal School Meals Act, which will increase access to healthy school meals for all and the importance of providing our nation's educators with the necessary tools to teach healthy nutrition habits in the classroom.

Children developing healthy habits early on will last a lifetime, something that America needs to invest in now. Mission: Readiness has expressed concern for our country's national defense because 71% of young people between the ages of 17 and 24 do not qualify for military service, with obesity disqualifying 31% of youth from serving if they so choose. In 2018, the United States Army fell short of its recruiting goal for the first time since 2005. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that obesity costs the U.S. \$147 billion annually in 2008 dollars. By 2030, medical costs associated with obesity are expected to increase by at least \$48 billion annually; medical costs coupled with reduced economic productivity costs could total between \$390 billion to \$580 billion. America must commit to addressing our obesity epidemic to not only provide the youngest generation with a healthier life but to ensure our armed forces are able to meet recruitment numbers.

I believe there is an opportunity for us to work together to achieve our shared goals that will have a significant impact on our communities and America's health. I would like to extend an invitation for you to speak at the Academy's annual conference, the Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo™, which will be held virtually this year, October 16-19. The world's largest gathering of food and nutrition experts, FNCE® attracts more than 10,000 registered dietitian nutritionists, nutrition science researchers, policy makers, health care providers and industry leaders who are interested to addressing key issues affecting the health of all Americans. Please reach out to the Academy's Vice President of Policy Initiatives and Advocacy Jeanne Blankenship at jblankenship@eatright.org or (312) 899-1730 if we can be of service to you in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda T. Farr".

Linda T. Farr, RDN, CSOWM, LD, FAND
Academy President