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August 26, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Comments Re: *Secretary Memorandum: SM 1078-015*

Dear Secretary Rollins:

On behalf of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the largest organization representing registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered (NDTRs), I write to ask you to reconsider the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and to share the Academy's priorities and perspective on the USDA's Food Nutrition Service mission. As you continue shaping policies that impact the health of our nation, we believe the expertise of RDNs and NDTRs should be actively incorporated into these discussions.

We are concerned that this proposed reorganization did not address USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and the critical resources that support national health and agricultural communities alike. In addition, we are alarmed by the planned closure of the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, which provides essential data for national nutrition policy. These resources comprise the foundation of efforts to improve the health of the nation and support the economic viability of the farmers who produce our food. The Human Nutrition Research Center's work also highlight the essential connection between healthy food production and Americans' dietary choices, a connection highlighted by this Administration in proposals like its "MAHA food boxes."

The budget, human resources, and technical systems supporting the following foundational programs must be maintained:

- MyPlate.gov: helps people to translate the food groups into the daily decisions they make about what to eat.
- Food Data Central: our nation's nutrient database provides a consistent and fact-based view of the nutritional value of all foods, and provides foundational data needed for advancing the current federal nutrition policy goal of addressing ultra-processed foods. The database is widely used by the food and restaurant industry as well as public health providers to help consumers make healthy choices.
- Nutrition Evidence Systematic Review (NESR): conducts the systematic reviews that inform the dietary guidelines and provides comprehensive, transparent evaluations of nutrition research to inform policy decisions and program development.
- Women Infants and Children: safeguards the health of low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age five by meeting critical nutrition needs through monthly benefits for specific healthy foods, tailored nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): provides low-income individuals and families with monthly benefits to purchase food, helping improve food security and nutrition.
- National School Lunch Program (NSLP); National Breakfast Program (NBP): programs that provide nutritious low-cost or free meals to children in public and nonprofit private schools.

Together, these efforts form the core of federally funded nutrition infrastructure on which countless nutrition practitioners, corporate wellness programs, community programs, food producers, restaurant operators, and others depend.

We urge the Administration to recognize and safeguard the vital role these nutrition resources play in improving national health. We strongly believe that the continuation of these resources is imperative to improving the health of Americans. We are requesting additional information to understand what the changes announced mean for these resources and the whole of our federally funded nutrition infrastructure.

As changes are considered, we urge the Administration to engage the Academy and our members in these discussions to share our insights on the importance of USDA's nutrition policies, programs, data, and initiatives to ensure that nutrition remains a foundational pillar in federal agriculture and MAHA initiatives. The Academy and its members stand ready to collaborate with USDA in shaping policies that are rooted in science and designed to promote better health nationwide.

We appreciate your leadership and look forward to working together to advance our shared goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deanne Brandstetter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

Deanne Brandstetter, MBA, RDN, CDN, FAND
President, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics