

Rochelle Walensky, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA, 30333

May 19, 2021

Dear Dr. Walensky:

As the Chief Executive Officer of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to thank you for your dedication to addressing the epidemic of racial and ethnic health disparities in the United States. We share the strategic goal of achieving health equity and offer our support in your work, as a food and nutrition professional organization and as essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic.

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. The Academy is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Academy members are the food and nutrition experts and understand the critical role nutrition plays in overall health and achieving health equity. We are also committed to increasing the diversity of our profession and improving access to culturally sensitive nutrition services.

Marginalized and minoritized populations have historically faced chronic disease health disparities due to socioeconomic inequalities and reduced access to comprehensive health care and preventive services, healthful foods and safe places to be active, and the Academy is dedicated to advocating for policies and programs that promote health equity. We have been long-time supporters of the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity and the Division's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health and State Physical Activity and Nutrition grant programs. We are pleased to share our recently published "[Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities and Chronic Disease Issue Brief](#)" and encourage its broad dissemination.

As part of our appropriations advocacy efforts, the Academy has requested \$125 million in federal funding for DNPAO to support CDC's efforts to build state and local capacity to implement and scale interventions that would improve nutrition and promote physical activity. This amount would allow for all 50 states and D.C. to receive SPAN grant funding, an Academy policy priority. As a proud national partner of the DNPAO, we have appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with DNPAO and other partners and look forward to future engagement initiatives to address key health and nutrition issues for all. Additionally, the Academy requested \$75.5 million for CDC's REACH grant program and \$27 million for its affiliated program Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC) to address the disproportionate impact of chronic disease on racial and ethnic populations in urban, rural and tribal areas.

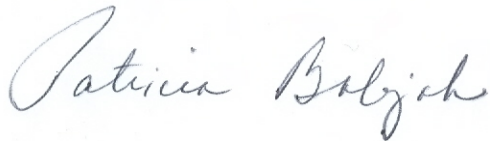
CDC data clearly describe health disparity for nutrition-related chronic disease and the Academy sees this as a call to action. As a member of the Diabetes Advocacy Alliance, we have worked to improve the National Diabetes Prevention Program and the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program to expand participation in both programs. We believe these programs have the potential to address disparities in diabetes rates if barriers to program expansion are addressed, particularly within the MDPP, and we will continue to work through the DAA to address these challenges with CMS.

For the past two years, the Academy has hosted the Nutrition and Health Equity Summit in collaboration with the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust to increase visibility of the importance of nutrition security and access to nutrition care services for achieving optimal community health. The summits have brought experts from diverse backgrounds together to explore the role of nutrition in chronic disease prevention and management and the untapped power of community engagement. We appreciate Dr. Karen Hacker, director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, joining us as a speaker at last year's virtual summit, attended by more than 3,000 individuals. The next summit is planned for February 2022 during Black History Month and will focus on food and nutrition policy, structured racism and solutions to achieve health equity. We would like to extend an invitation to you and your team to again participate and to discuss including other national partners.

CDC has been a trusted source of evidence-based advice throughout the COVID-19 pandemic for health professionals and the public. The Academy continues to disseminate this information to our members and consumers in our communication channels in alignment with our commitment to public access to credible resources. In addition, the Academy worked with CDC last year to review and provide feedback for a COVID-19 school reopening resource for school nutrition professionals.

The Academy looks forward to continued collaboration with the CDC to foster health equity as part of our ongoing partnership. Please reach out to me or 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 or your colleagues. Congratulations again and best wishes for success in your important role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Babjak". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Patricia M. Babjak
Chief Executive Officer