



March 9, 2020

Re: 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee; Docket No. FNS-2019-0001

Barbara Schneeman, PhD
Chair, 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee
c/o Eve Stooddy, PhD
Designated Federal Officer
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Food and Nutrition Service U.S. Department of
Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302

CC:
Brandon Lipps
Acting Deputy Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Administrator, Food and
Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

Don Wright, MD, MPH
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health
Director, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite LL100
Tower Building
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Members of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee,

As retired admirals and generals and members of the national security organization Mission: Readiness we respectfully urge you to carefully consider the impact that the Committee's recommendations will have on our future national security.

Mission: Readiness is an organization of 750 retired admirals and generals who are concerned that, according to the Department of Defense, 71 percent of 17-to-24 year olds are currently unqualified to

serve in the military. **Obesity is one of the leading disqualifiers, with nearly one in three young Americans being too overweight to serve.** In 2018, Mission: Readiness released a national report, [*Unhealthy and Unprepared*](#), which highlights just how dire this situation has become. The report notes that the U.S. Army, the military's largest branch, did not meet its annual recruitment goal last year due, in part, to obesity and other disqualifiers for military service.

The obesity epidemic is also impacting current servicemembers. Each year, the Department of Defense spends \$1.5 billion on health care related to obesity for active duty and former service members and their families. Further, active duty service members miss over 650,000 work days annually due to obesity-related issues, placing added strain on a force that is already stretched thin.

We are starting to see obesity in children as young as age two, which is why the best way to turn the tide on this epidemic is by instilling good eating, drinking, and exercise habits from an early age. We believe that we all have a responsibility to help young people stay in school, stay fit, and stay out of trouble so that they can succeed at whatever they choose in life, whether that is a career in the military or a different path.

Mission: Readiness has a long track-record of advocating for a range of obesity-prevention efforts, but **we'd like to specifically highlight the importance of prioritizing water as a beverage of choice. We know beverages are a topic the Committee is closely considering.** We are focused on promoting water consumption since we know that sugar-sweetened beverages are uniquely harmful to health. They are the largest single source of added sugar in the American diet. For our youth, they are the top source of added sugar and among the top sources of calories. There is now an extensive scientific evidence basis on the multiple adverse health outcomes related to excess sugar consumption, particularly when consumed in liquid form.

We believe that the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans should include strong language recommending drinking water. This focus should include dietary guidance throughout the lifespan but should also include strong, actionable recommendations to support drinking water access and education, similar to those in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee report.

Additionally, we recommend that U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services take the necessary steps to add a symbol for water to the MyPlate graphic, to stress the importance of water consumption for an overall healthy lifestyle. Nearly fifty countries have featured water prominently in their dietary guidance graphic, and it is time that we do this, too. These recommendations fall in line with work the military is already doing to improve troop health. The Army,

Navy, and Air Force each have fitness programs that stress the importance of proper hydration and avoiding excess calories.

In order to ensure that children are prepared to succeed in life, we need comprehensive action that involves parents, schools, and communities to help children understand and make healthy choices. By prioritizing water consumption over other beverages, the Committee will be following the military's example to ensure that Americans have the resources they need to make healthy choices.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or would like to further discuss this matter, you can contact Ben Goodman, National Director of Mission: Readiness, at bgoodman@missionreadiness.org. Thank you for this opportunity to provide a comment on the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Very respectfully,



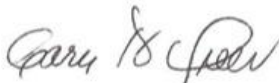
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U.S. Army



Lieutenant General (Ret.) John P. Otjen
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Lieutenant General (Ret.)
Gary D. Speer
U.S. Army



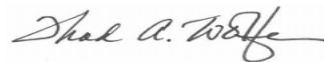
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Major General (Ret.) Doug Anson
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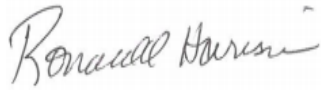
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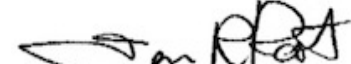
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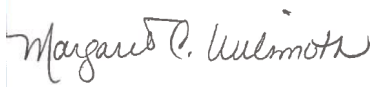
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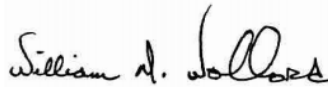
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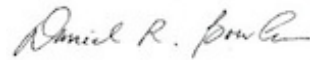
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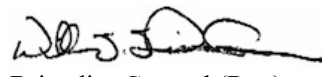
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Velma L. Richardson
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Brigadier General (Ret.)
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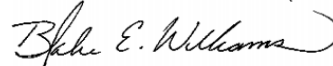
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Rear Admiral Fernandez Ponds
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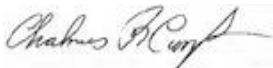
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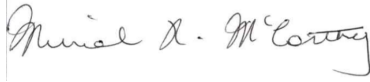
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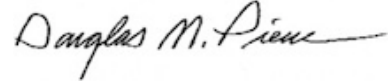
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