



Food is Medicine Legislative Update, Katie Sawyer

# Food is Medicine



**"Making nutritious foods more accessible to Americans improves health outcomes, and increases government savings for patients and the health system." - Senator Roger Marshall, M.D.**

# Multi-Pronged Legislative Approach

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Senator Marshall has worked both across the aisle and with multiple federal agencies to advocate for legislation that hits at the larger issue of proper nutrition and improved lifestyles.

## **USDA**

- School lunch program
- WIC program
- GusNIP

## **HHS**

- Medicare
- Medically Tailored Meals
- CHC/FQHCs
- Agency-led Food is Medicine initiative

## **FDA**

- Human Foods Project
- Agency Food Czar conversations

# HHS - NIH

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## THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH INCLUDES FOOD IS MEDICINE IN ITS 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

### **NIH releases strategic plan to accelerate nutrition research over next 10 years**

The strategic plan is organized around four strategic goals that answer key questions in nutrition research:

1. Spur Discovery and Innovation through Foundational Research: What do we eat and how does it affect us?
2. Investigate the Role of Dietary Patterns and Behaviors for Optimal Health: What and when should we eat?
3. Define the Role of Nutrition Across the Lifespan: How does what we eat promote health across our lifespan?
4. Reduce the Burden of Disease in Clinical Settings: How can we improve the use of food as medicine?



# HHS - OASH

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Office of  
Disease Prevention  
and Health Promotion

Building on this collective energy, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) developed a Food is Medicine initiative in response to a [congressionally funded initiative](#) in fiscal year 2023. This congressional action directed the Secretary of HHS, in consultation with other federal agencies, to develop and implement a federal strategy to reduce nutrition-related chronic diseases and food insecurity to improve health and racial equity in the United States. This includes diet-related research and programmatic efforts that will increase access to Food is Medicine initiatives.

It's estimated that obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and the 13 nutrition-related cancers cost the US economy **\$16 trillion between 2011-2020**. From our federal budget to military recruitment – **obesity is one of our nation's greatest internal threats.**

# Prioritizing Nutrition at HHS

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→ **National Food is Medicine Strategic Plan Act:** Our legislation would require HHS to create a strategic plan agency-wide to improve health outcomes by including nutrition for people with diet-related illnesses.

→ **Community Health Center (CHC) Nutrition Act:** Our bill would require CHCs to offer nutritional and dietary services to low-income patients and enhance primary care delivery for better patient outcomes.

# Prioritizing Nutrition at HHS

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- ➔ **Medically Tailored Home-Delivered Meals Demonstration Act (S. 2133):** With Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Bill Cassidy, MD (R-LA), our bill aims to provide powerful insight into how medically tailored meals can positively impact the health of Medicare seniors with certain diet-related diseases.
- ➔ **Nutrition Real-Time Benefit Tools for Providers Act:** Our bill would require federal agencies to empower CHCs with critical information about their patients enrolled in federal nutrition programs to help them make meal choices tailored to their health.

# Putting the “F” Back in FDA

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**Human Foods Program:** Following the infant formula crisis, Senator Marshall pushed for major reforms. The FDA has now established the Human Foods Program.

**Conversations with Food Czar:** Senator Marshall has met with Jim Jones, the new “Food Czar” at the FDA. His priorities include developing better voluntary goals of lessons learned from the UK, where it is all about “less salt, more taste!” Plus, consumer-friendly front-label nutrition packaging.



# Supporting Maternal and Infant Health

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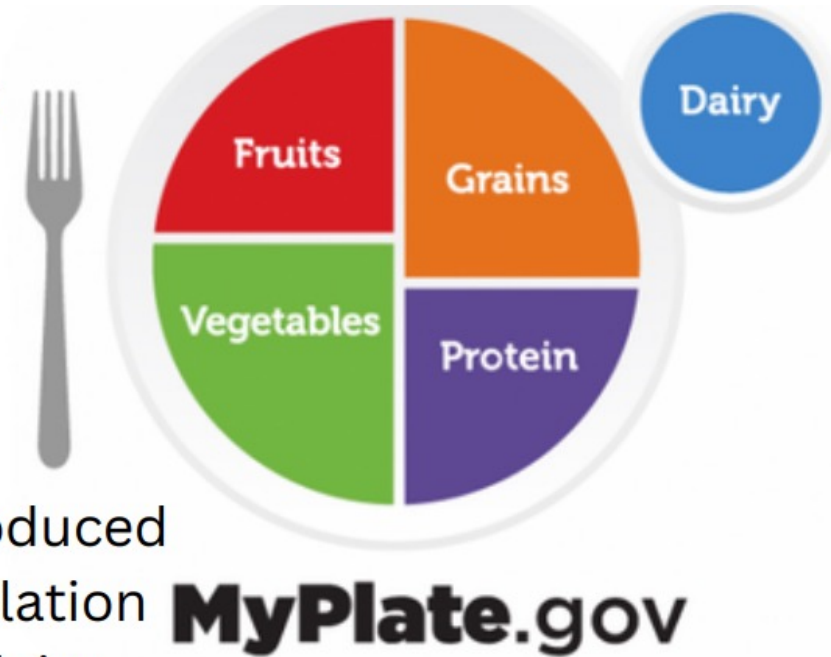
- ➔ **WIC Healthy Beginnings Act (S. 974):** Introduced with Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), our bill would improve the WIC public-private partnership to more closely align with regular contracting norms to increase transparency and competition for infant formula. Recognizing our bill's value, the USDA used its regulatory authority and implemented it earlier this year.
- ➔ **More Options to Develop and Enhance Remote Nutrition in WIC (MODERN WIC) Act (S. 984):** Introduced with Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), our bill would allow families to certify and re-certify for WIC services remotely, making it easier for hardworking families in rural communities to stay in the program.
- ➔ **Recognizing the Value of Frozen Foods in WIC:** We are currently working on legislation to allow frozen fruits and vegetables as part of state WIC programs nationwide. Kansas does not allow frozen fruits and vegetables as an option in the WIC program.

# Beefing up Child Nutrition Programs

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➔ **Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act (S. 1957):** Introduced alongside Peter Welch (D-VT) and 9 bipartisan Senators, our bill would mandate that K-12 schools provide whole milk as an option under the National School Lunch Program.

➔ **Dairy Nutrition Incentive Program Act (S. 1474):** Introduced alongside Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), our bipartisan legislation seeks to increase consumption of nutrition milk and dairy products through SNAP incentives.





# Beefing up Child Nutrition Programs

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- ➔ **Adding Water to MyPlate:** We are currently advocating for the water icon to be added to the MyPlate nutritional graphic and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Water is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, and it needs to be prioritized in federal nutrition educational materials.
- ➔ **Strengthening Nutrition Incentives Programs within SNAP:** The upcoming Farm Bill provides an opportunity to update and streamline nutrition incentive programs such as the Gus Schmacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) and the Healthy Fluid Milk Incentive Program to increase participation among SNAP recipients.



# USDA - Farm Bill Priorities

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The Senator's goal for the next Farm Bill is to provide producers with the tools necessary to continue producing the world's safest and most affordable food supply.

In addition to SNAP, the Farm Bill will reauthorize:

- Commodity Distribution Program
- Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program



# USDA - Farm Bill Priorities

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The Rural Development and Horticulture Titles include the following programs to help with the growth of our local food systems:

- Rural Business Investment Program
- Local Agriculture Market Programs
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Historically Underserved Producers (under Miscellaneous title)

# Looking Forward

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We have several opportunities for forward progress on multiple bills and hearings on issues related to FIM.

As Ranking Members, Senator Marshall is currently working on a Food is Medicine Hearing in HELP Committee

We will be looking for opportunities to include legislation on other “legislative vehicles” throughout the year.

The Farm Bill was extended until Sept. 30, 2024. The path forward for the legislation is unclear at this time.

We look forward to working with everyone to move FIM across the finish line! 14

Thank you!  
Any Questions?

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