



Submitted via [DPCPSIreorgcomments@nih.gov](mailto:DPCPSIreorgcomments@nih.gov)

December 29, 2020

James M. Anderson, MD, PhD  
Director, Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Anderson,

The [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#) supports the proposed transfer of the Office of Nutrition Research (ONR) to the Director's Office within the National Institutes of Health. This transfer will facilitate greater and more effective cutting-edge nutrition research across NIH. Poor nutrition is challenging almost every aspect of our society, contributing to poor health, health disparities, and preventable healthcare spending. More effective federal coordination and greater investment in nutrition research would accelerate discoveries across numerous critical areas and positively impact public health, equity, the economy, national security, and the nation's resilience to new threats.

The transfer should include new and expanded staff, including communications specialists and experts in a variety of nutrition disciplines, all present in other similar NIH Office of the Director Offices. These should increase capacity and expertise for dissemination and visibility of nutrition science to the public and other stakeholders. The size and staffing of ONR should compare favorably to the size and staffing of the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, a small subset of nutrition.

The new Director of the NIH ONR should also serve as the NIH Associate Director for Nutrition Research, similar to the NIH Office of Disease Prevention Director who also serves as the NIH Associate Director for Prevention ([P.L. 99-158](#)). The new Office Director should possess demonstrated expertise, skills, and experience to successfully lead the nation's nutrition research strategy.

Within the NIH Office of the Director, the ONR can create a more formalized approach to engage strong external advisory mechanisms and strengthen input from other federal departments and agencies, academic institutions, advocacy groups, state and local governments, community members, and other stakeholders.

A [recent NIH analysis](#) evaluated the leading risk factors and causes of death and disability in the United States and concluded that large mismatches exist between the top causes of poor health versus NIH research funding to address them, with the largest gap being for nutrition. The transfer of the ONR into the NIH Office of the Director is a critical step to elevate the coordination, leadership, staffing, resources, and capacities for critical nutrition research within and outside NIH.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Jerold Mande, MPH, Senior Advisor to the President  
Peter Lurie, MD, MPH, Executive Director and President