INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

HARVEY V. FINEBERG, M.D., Ph.D.
President

3 June 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Institute of Medicine recently released a report, *Sodium Intake in Populations: Assessment of Evidence* (May, 2013). Following the release of the report, some press coverage misstated the conclusions of the report.

I am writing to stress key points in the committee's report. First, the evidence linking sodium intake to health outcomes supports current efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other authoritative bodies to reduce sodium intake in the U.S. population below the current average adult intake of 3,400 mg per day. Second, the evidence reviewed on health outcomes does not currently support reductions in dietary sodium in the general population to levels as low as 1,500 mg per day, a level currently attained by less than one percent of the population. Third, some evidence suggests that lowering dietary sodium intake may prevent heart disease risk through pathways in addition to blood pressure. Lastly, because the available evidence is inconsistent in its findings, further research is needed to clarify associations between low levels (1,500 to 2,300 mg) of sodium intake and health outcomes.

The IOM report, the CDC, and other authoritative bodies, including the American Heart Association, are congruent in supporting a population-wide reduction in current levels of sodium intake. I hope this restatement of the report's conclusions will mitigate any misunderstanding, so that the information from the report can be constructively useful to the public and to policy-makers.

Sincerely,

Harvey V. Fineberg, M.D., Ph.D.
President, IOM

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

Keck Center of the National Academies
500 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2721

Phone: 202 334 3300
Fax: 202 334 3851
E-mail: fineberg@nas.edu