



March 14, 2022

Ambassador Susan Rice
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
Domestic Policy Council
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ambassador Rice,

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)¹ supports a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health. The first conference occurred over 50 years ago, spurring the movement toward the Nutrition Facts panel and leading to the creation and expansion of critical food and nutrition safety net programs: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program. Today we face different challenges: an epidemic of obesity, COVID-19-related morbidity, and much more. Once again, we hope this conference will accelerate progress to reduce the impact and burden of preventable diet-related diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes which are leading causes of death and disability. Nutrition insecurity and diet-related chronic diseases disproportionately affect people of color as well as low-income, rural, and other underserved populations.

This Conference is an opportunity to modernize and enhance our food system. It is a chance to build our food environment into one which ensures universal access to a healthy diet. The Conference can be a catapult to an improved food system infrastructure that is sustainable and resilient.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the strengths and weaknesses of our food system. For instance, although overall food insecurity levels stayed roughly the same during the pandemic, likely attributable to many public supports and increased investments in SNAP, WIC, and school meals, food insecurity among children increased and existing inequities in food security widened between Black and Hispanic households when compared to white households.²

As a country we must do more to create a food system and environment that makes it easier for everyone to eat better and that is equitable, safe, and transparent. CSPI stands ready to work together with you to make this new conference a reality.

Sincerely,

Peter Lurie, MD, MPH
President
Center for Science in the Public Interest

¹ CSPI, an independent food and health watchdog, envisions a healthy population with reduced impact and burden of preventable diseases and an equitable food system that makes healthy, sustainable food accessible to all. CSPI is one of the nation's oldest independent, science-based consumer advocacy organizations.

² Coleman-Jensen, A et al. Household Food Security in the United States in 2020, ERR-298, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 2021. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/102076/err-298.pdf?v=5485.5> See: Figure 5