

By Electronic Mail

December 13, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Senator Burr:

The undersigned organizations represent the nation's food and agriculture sector which are an essential part of the economy and are responsible for feeding the nation. Together, our members and their employees are responsible for roughly one-fifth of the country's economic activity, directly supporting nearly 20 million jobs that equals more than 13% of U.S. employment. Americans look to our members to produce the food and beverage staples that they rely on each day to live healthy, fulfilling lives.

On behalf of our sector, we are pleased to see President Biden nominate a highly qualified public health expert in Dr. Robert Califf to lead the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as the next FDA Commissioner. The FDA is one of the most important regulatory agencies within the federal government because it helps ensure the safety, nutritional quality, and security of our nation's food supply.

As you consider the nomination of Dr. Califf and his strong credentials in the medical/public health community, we encourage you and your colleagues to also examine and highlight the importance of a renewed focus at FDA on the food component of FDA's responsibility. During the past 2 years, drug development, public health and vaccine administration – was and had to be - the critical focus of FDA. At the same time, however, most food standards have not been updated in decades even as diets have become more personalized. This area could benefit from additional flexibility to accommodate science-based innovation and changing consumer dietary needs; as well as more expedited ways to finalize pending rules and petitions. We encourage enhanced efforts by FDA to partner with the private sector to foster streamlined processes to advance innovation technology for healthier profile products that can positively impact public health. This partnership with the private sector should also apply to food safety to advance risk-based (vs hazard-based) food safety policies grounded in the best available science.

Another area that could use additional focus is retrospective regulatory impact analyses to determine if food labeling regulations resulted in the type of public health impact they were intended to bring about. These analyses are critical to determining if future regulatory actions are warranted and are a real opportunity and necessity now that the urgency of the public health emergency is stabilizing.

We, the undersigned organizations, value the work of FDA on matters of food safety, food standards, labeling, and nutrition and health. We congratulate Dr. Califf on his nomination and the Committee on moving this nomination forward quickly. We look forward to continuing to work with members of this Committee and the FDA to ensure greater transparency, accountability, and collaboration as we embrace science-based innovations, changing consumer dietary needs and the need for expedited rules and analysis.

Please contact us with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

American Bakers Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Peanut Council
Consumer Brands Association
Corn Refiners Association
FMI – the Food Industry Association
International Dairy Foods Association
National Confectioners Association
National Fisheries Institute
National Grocers Association
National Restaurant Association
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
Peanut and Tree Nut Processors Association
SNAC International
United Fresh Produce Association