



Food Is Medicine Coalition Applauds the Inclusion of Medically Tailored Meals in the Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health

Today, in advance of the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health (WHC), the White House released its ambitious [National Strategy](#) to end hunger, promote health and increase access to nutrition across the country by 2030. Today, the [Food Is Medicine Coalition](#) (FIMC), a national coalition of nonprofits providing medically tailored nutrition services to people across the country experiencing diet-related chronic illnesses, responds to the recommendations of the Strategy.

FIMC is most encouraged by the Strategy's focus in Pillar 2 on the power and promise of more fully incorporating medically tailored meals and other food is medicine interventions into healthcare.

Medically tailored meals (MTMs) are delivered to individuals living with severe illness through a referral from a medical professional or healthcare plan. Meal plans are tailored to the medical needs of the recipient by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), and can lead to significantly [lower healthcare costs](#), [drastically reduced hospitalizations](#) and [increased likelihood of discharge to home](#), rather than to more costly institutional care.

FIMC is pleased that the Biden-Harris administration is standing by its commitment to advance health equity by highlighting the importance of access to medically tailored meals in our nationwide effort to address diet-related illness and treatment. The National Strategy supports legislative pilots to test covering medically tailored meals for individuals in traditional Medicare who are experiencing diet-related health conditions and promises increased guidance and authority from CMS for states wishing to use Medicaid section 1115 demonstration projects to test the expansion of coverage for food is medicine interventions. We know that the increased attention and resources will further our existing efforts in this space.

FIMC agencies have been at the [forefront of ongoing efforts to expand access to MTM and other food is medicine interventions over the past decade](#), and we are delighted to witness the support of the Administration for these projects. Several immediate opportunities exist to leverage the recommendations of the Strategy. [H.R. 5370 - Medically Tailored Home-Delivered Meal Demonstration Pilot Act of 2021](#) – a bill that would establish a multi-state Medicare pilot program that would ensure that medically vulnerable people get access to lifesaving medically tailored meals in their home, while providing the outcomes data we need to build a more equitable, resilient and cost-effective health care system, currently has more than 50 cosponsors in the House and we look to an imminent Senate introduction. **Given the strong bipartisan support in the House and the charge from the President, we urge Congress to move forward with this bill as soon as possible.**

Further, 1115 Waiver demonstrations in [California](#), [Massachusetts](#), [New York](#), [North Carolina](#) and other states are more fully incorporating MTM and other food is medicine interventions into baseline Medicaid care, while focusing attention on the gaps in healthcare infrastructure that must be addressed to allow MTM agencies and their healthcare partners to properly screen, refer, bill and code for nutrition interventions. Increased attention, support and funding for modernizing healthcare regulation and infrastructure for these demonstrations would further their reach.

Diet-related illnesses disproportionately impact Black, Latinx, and Native Americans, low-income families, and older Americans – the exact population that FIMC agencies serve. Right now, whether a person has access to medically tailored meals depends on where they live and if their insurance provider offers this service – a situation that must change. **Medically tailored meals are one of the least expensive and most effective ways to improve our healthcare system in an equitable way**

For years, achieving a more efficient and equitable healthcare system by incorporating MTM into healthcare through pilots has been our number one commitment. While much success has been seen in these pilots, they remain on the margins of innovation and fall short of establishing the widespread coverage needed to ensure equitable access to these critical services. We know there is still more to do and we pledge to work diligently with the Biden-Harris administration and Congress to further this goal, while continuing to focus our advocacy efforts on changing healthcare policy to fund, deliver and explicitly evaluate the MTM intervention in Medicare, Medicaid and other healthcare funding mechanisms.

FIMC is ready to serve. FIMC has been steadily increasing the number of community-based, nonprofit MTM providers in communities across the country through our [FIMC Accelerator](#) program. Nine new providers have been created in two years and five more are enrolled in our Year 3 cohort. We passionately believe in being responsive to our clients' needs and that the strength of our coalition flows from our adherence to national nutrition and programmatic standards interpreted by local agencies grounded in the unique diversity of their communities.

The National Strategy is a historic platform supporting the health and wellbeing of millions of Americans who struggle with access to nourishing food and the health benefits that access conveys. The Strategy builds on the significant policy advances of the first conference over 50 years ago with multiple groundbreaking recommendations, such as expanding SNAP to more underserved populations, advancing access to healthy school meals, recommending increased support for fruit and vegetable purchases, empowering consumers to make healthy choices, and supporting physical activity for all. The significant proposals for universal screening for food insecurity, equity in nutrition services and enhancing nutrition and food security research have the potential to change lives and the face of hunger and health in our country.

Thanks to the leadership of the Biden-Harris administration and bipartisan Congressional champions, this new National Strategy has expansive goals. Achieving them will require us all. FIMC member agencies are ready to continue working alongside the White House, Congress, federal agencies, the business sector and - most importantly - our communities to bring our life-saving service to all those in need across the country. We hope that the National Strategy will be a catalyst to expanding this important work.

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