



November 28, 2017

United States Department of Agriculture
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

Re: Written Testimony - 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Listening Session

To Whom It May Concern:

MISSION: READINESS is the national security nonprofit organization of more than 700 retired admirals, generals, and top military leaders across the nation who advocate for smart, research-based investments in America's youth.

Today, more than 70 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds in the United States cannot serve in the military, primarily because they are too poorly educated, too overweight, or have a record of crime or drug abuse.¹ Further, being overweight or obese is the leading medical reason why young adults cannot join the military. A limited pool of potential recruits threatens our military preparedness and future national security.

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the largest single source of added sugar in the American diet.² The currently available evidence is extensive and supports a causal link between SSB consumption and the obesity epidemic, particularly in children, by contributing to excess caloric intake.³ However, the health risks – and burgeoning public health costs – extend beyond obesity. Over-consumption of SSBs is linked to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, dental caries, hypertension, fatty liver and other metabolic disease; these consequences and costs are magnified in vulnerable population sectors.⁴

A common sense step towards combatting this national health and security issue is to ensure that all children have access to safe drinking water where they live, learn and play. Water is an essential, calorie-free alternative that can be used to counter childhood obesity, and ensuring that safe, potable drinking water is available to all citizens, especially children, is a public health imperative.

¹ 2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA), based on personal communication between Mission: Readiness and the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.

² Centers for Disease Control 2017. Get the facts: Sugar sweetened beverages and consumption.

³ Malik VS, Willett WC, Hu FB. Sugar-sweetened beverages and BMI in children and adolescents: reanalyses of a meta-analysis. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2009;89:438-9.

⁴ Malik, V, Popkin, B, Bray, G, Desprs, J-P, Hu, F. 2010. Sugar sweetened beverages, obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and cardiovascular disease risk. *Circulation*, 121, 1356-1364.

Providing effective access to drinking water gives children a healthy alternative to SSBs. When substituted for SSBs, water consumption has been shown to reduce children's energy intake.^{5 6} Evidence shows that increasing children's access to water increases their consumption⁷, particularly when paired with education, promotion and other best practices.⁸ Studies show that maintaining hydration can also improve children's cognitive function.^{9 10 11}

In coordination with the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MISSION: READINESS was pleased to see the phrase, "Drink water instead of sugary drinks," appear on the MyPlate, MyWins tip sheet and we believe the time to take the next step forward is now.

MISSION: READINESS urges inclusion of the necessary expertise in the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee to permit a focus on beverages, and specifically on how to guide Americans towards drinking water instead of SSBs. This will allow the Advisory Committee to strengthen language for drinking water and add a symbol for water to the "MyPlate" graphic, which is the primary representation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony and we wish you great success as you work diligently to construct the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Sincerely,

Sandra Bishop-Josef, Ph.D.

Research Director

MISSION: READINESS

⁵ Zheng M, Rangan A, Olsen NJ, Andersen LB, Wedderkopp N, Kristensen P, Grøntved A, Ried-Larsen M, Lempert SM, Allman-Farinelli M, Heitmann BL. 2015. Substituting sugar-sweetened beverages with water or milk is inversely associated with body fatness development from childhood to adolescence. *Nutrition* 31(1):38-44.

⁶ Zheng M, Allman-Farinelli M, Heitmann BL, Rangan A. 2015. Substitution of sugar-sweetened beverages with other beverage alternatives: a review of long-term health outcomes. *J Acad Nutr Diet* 115(5):767-79.

⁷ Elbel B, Mijanovich T, Abrams C, Cantor J, Dunn L, Nonas C, Cappola K, Onufrak S, Park S. 2015. A Water Availability Intervention in New York City Public Schools: Influence on Youths' Water and Milk Behaviors. *Am J Pub Health* 105(2):365-372.

⁸ Kenney EL, Gortmaker SL, Carter JE, Howe CW, Reiner JF, Craddock AL. 2015. Grab a Cup, Fill It Up! An Intervention to Promote the Convenience of Drinking Water and Increase Student Water Consumption During School Lunch. *Am J Pub Health* 105(9):1777-1783.

⁹ Edmonds CJ, Burford D. Should children drink more water?: the effects of drinking water on cognition in children. 2009. *Appetite* 52(3):776-9.

¹⁰ Benton D, Burgess N. The effect of the consumption of water on the memory and attention of children. 2009. *Appetite* 53(1):143-6.

¹¹ Booth P, Taylor B, Edmonds CJ. 2012 Water supplementation improves visual attention and fine motor skills in schoolchildren. *Education and Health* 30:75-79.