



Feb. 21, 2025: National Advocacy Update



AMA grants five Outstanding Government Service Awards

As part of last week's National Advocacy Conference, five recipients were honored with an AMA Award for Outstanding Government Service.

The AMA awards honor elected officials and career government employees at the local, state and federal levels for their significant contributions to the advancement of public health and the promotion of the art and science of medicine.

This year's recipients include:

- Michelle Au, MD, MPH, representative, Georgia House of Representatives
- Richard M. Briggs, MD, senator, Tennessee Senate
- Neal Dunn, MD (R-FL), representative, U.S. House of Representatives
- Major Gen. (ret.) Paul Friedrichs, MD, adjunct professor of surgery, Uniformed Services University
- Jennifer Green, PhD, MPH, public health director, Cumberland County, North Carolina

[Learn more](#) about the work of each award recipient and the AMA Awards for Outstanding Government Service.

AMA dietary guidelines comments applaud focus on chronic disease while urging more on ultra-processed foods and



alcohol

On Feb. 6, the AMA submitted [comments](#) (PDF) on the [draft report](#) for the 2026-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The AMA commended the committee's focus on the link between diet and chronic disease and recommendations to limit intake of sodium, added sugars, and saturated fat. However, the AMA urged the committee to go further with their recommendations on ultra-processed foods and alcohol consumption.

The AMA agreed with the committee that the focus should not only be on the recommended amounts and types of foods, but also on evidence-based behavioral and lifestyle interventions, and that in order to be most effective, nutritional guidelines should be supplemented with evidence-based methods to effectively communicate and implement the guidance with specific subpopulations in mind, such as school-aged children. The AMA closed the letter underscoring the importance of investing in future nutrition research, including the relative effectiveness of various intervention strategies.

President Trump issues Executive Order to establish MAHA Commission

On Feb. 13, President Donald J. Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) that creates the [Make America Healthy Again \(MAHA\) Commission](#) to investigate and address what his administration sees as the root causes of America's escalating health crisis, with an initial focus on childhood chronic diseases. President Trump calls for a new public and private sector focus toward understanding and drastically lowering chronic disease rates and ending childhood chronic disease. The Executive Order (EO) includes an emphasis on nutrition, physical activity, healthy lifestyles, over-reliance on medication and treatments, the effects of new technological habits, environmental impacts and food and drug quality and safety.

The EO also describes how the role of the commission is to advise and assist President Trump by studying the scope of the childhood chronic disease crisis and any potential contributing causes, including the American diet, absorption of toxic material, medical treatments and lifestyle. The commission is also specified in the EO to work with the president on informing the American people regarding the childhood chronic disease crisis, using transparent and clear facts, and providing government-wide recommendations on policy and strategy related to addressing the identified contributing causes of and ending the crisis. Details are still emerging, but four main policy objectives to reverse chronic disease were identified for the commission.

The commission will be chaired by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and will include officials from across government, with the secretaries of Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Veterans Affairs, or their designees participating. Within 100 days, the



commission is scheduled to produce an assessment that summarizes what is known and what questions remain regarding the childhood chronic disease crisis (including international comparisons), followed by the development of a strategy to improve the health of America's children within 180 days.

The AMA will be monitoring the activities of the MAHA Commission and looking for opportunities to represent the interests of physicians, medical students and patients.