

April 8, 2024

# Intro to School Nutrition Advocacy

Advocacy Opportunities for  
Health Care Professionals



# About Balanced

Nutrition security and public health advocacy organization focused on improving the healthfulness of food environments in schools, hospitals, offices, and other critical community institutions.

advocacy

institutional support

nutrition research & policy

focus on fiber



# Advocacy & Policy Examples

School or District

Federal Nutrition Policy and Regulations

State Nutrition Policy

Example

## School or District

**Example:** School/District agrees to menu change or nutrition policy commitment



*the need for*  
**BALANCE**



EXAMPLE NUTRITION POLICY DOCUMENT

### *The Ask*

Over the next 2 years, commit to eliminating processed meat and replacing at least 20% of the overall meat, poultry, and egg products and ultra-processed foods purchased and served by Generic City Public Schools with fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and other plant-proteins.



**Pros:** Least intensive, requires fewer resources, relatively quick

**Cons:** Fewer students impacted, dependent on decision maker buy-in, district-by-district

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Examples

## State Level

**Example:** State enacts policy/law specific to school meal requirements [strengthen USDA nutrition or food component requirements, expands options or removes barriers, provides additional funding]

### Massachusetts

An Act Relative to Healthy School Lunches (S.308/H.564) & School Meal Nutrition Standards Commission



### Illinois\*

IL4089 - Plant-based school meals upon prior request



**Pros:** State-level flexibility, constituent-leadership, easier mobilize key stakeholders, easier access to lawmakers, potential precedent  
**Cons:** Each state is different [laws, regulations, opposition, funding priorities, legislative process]

# Advocacy & Policy Examples

School or District

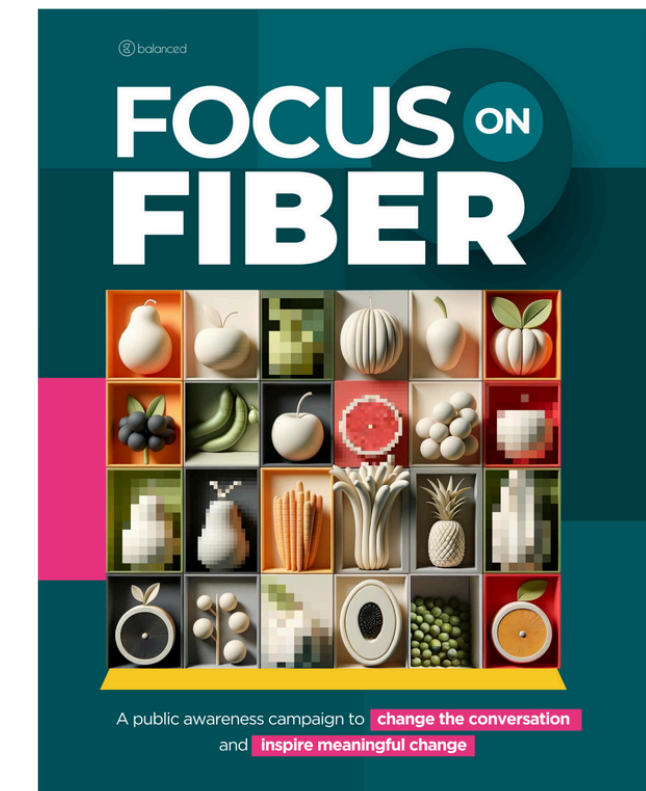
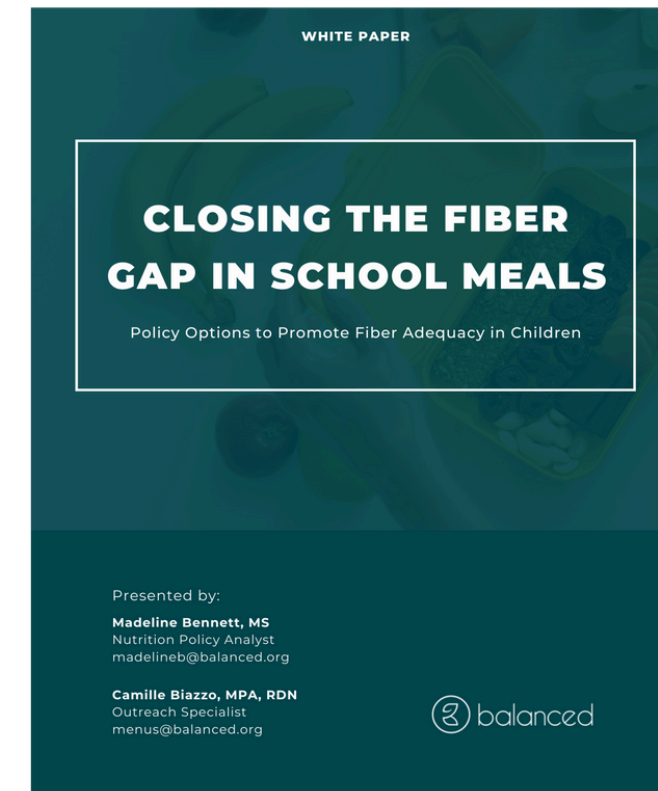
Federal Nutrition Policy and Regulations

State Nutrition Policy

Examples

## Federal Level

**Example:** Add regulation to or change/clarify definition in meal pattern



## Focus on Fiber

Calling on USDA to add a Fiber Component to the NSLP reimbursable meal pattern

**Pros:** Massive impact

**Cons:** Exceedingly slow, traditionally USDA vs. Congress, major industry opposition

# Demystifying the process

## Advocacy & Campaigning

On paper: vague

In action: concrete, replicable

Clear  
goal or  
policy  
proposal

Organizing  
& mobilizing  
supporters

Influencing  
Decision  
Makers

**Successful nutrition policy/advocacy efforts rely on a strong, organized community of supporters and a productive working relationship with decision makers.**

# Opportunities to Engage

**As individuals**

**With relevant coalitions/groups**

**Lead by MIG**

Clear goal or policy proposal

Organizing & mobilizing supporters

Influencing Decision Makers

**Need and opportunity for healthcare professionals in all parts**

Clear goal or policy proposal

- Research
- Draft or review policy
- Provide expertise

Organizing & mobilizing supporters

- Publicly endorse and share campaign
- Promote efforts
- Engage personal/professional networks
- Action alert engagement
- Facilitate connections

Influencing Decision Makers

- Contact relevant lawmakers
- Testify at meetings / hearings
- Attend fundraisers or events

# Unique Role of Health Care Professionals

## • Expertise

## • Trust & credibility

## • Influence & connections

Doctors, medical professionals, and health care workers are uniquely positioned to influence change within communities and with decision makers.

### **Expertise**

Health care professionals' expertise plays a crucial role in the advocacy and policy process by providing evidence-based insights and authoritative recommendations that shape policies and advocacy initiatives.

### **Trust & Credibility**

Trust in, and credibility of, health care professionals means endorsements and viewpoints are highly valued by policymakers and the public alike -- making your involvement in policy and advocacy efforts even more impactful.

### **Influence & Connections**

Health care professionals can leverage their influence and connections to facilitate dialogue and action in the advocacy and policy-making process, bridging gaps between medical evidence, public health needs, and legislative decisions. Your networks within healthcare and government can be of real value to advocacy efforts.



# Getting started

## Existing Efforts

- Join Coalitions (individuals and as a group)
- Sign Petitions/Endorsements
- Sign up for action alerts
- Share on social media
- Contact lawmakers to voice support
- Reach out to organizing groups

## Launch New Efforts

- Research
- Start building supporter group
- Contact groups doing similar work (Balanced!)

# Contact

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**audreys@balanced.org**

[www.balanced.org](http://www.balanced.org)

Endorse the Focus on Fiber Campaign:  
**[balanced.org/fiber](http://balanced.org/fiber)**

Contact **[fiber@balanced.org](mailto:fiber@balanced.org)** to get involved in the public awareness & education efforts!

    @thebalancedorg



# Demystifying the process

## Advocacy Campaign

On paper: vague

In action: concrete, replicable, procedural



**Successful nutrition policy/advocacy efforts rely on a strong, organized community of supporters and a productive working relationship with decision makers.**

# Considerations

## Priorities

End goal  
Strategic approach  
Entry/leverage points  
Level of change - local, state, federal

## People

As individuals  
As an association/group  
Other groups  
Formal or informal structure  
Leadership  
Network & connections

## Landscape

Any local/state/federal initiatives to learn from  
Demographics of region/area  
Deep understanding of school food landscape depending on priorities

## Expertise

Medical - specialties & areas of influence  
Policy/legislative  
Campaigning

## Capacity

Time - short & long term  
Resources  
Depth of network  
Intensity of strategy/actions