



Statement on the Introduction of the Medical Nutrition Equity Act

May 22, 2017, Ambler, PA — The North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) applauds today’s bipartisan and bicameral introduction of the “Medical Nutrition Equity Act.”

Medically necessary formulas and vitamins are routinely prescribed or recommended by pediatric gastroenterologists to treat children with a variety of diseases and conditions of the gastrointestinal system, including chronic gastrointestinal diseases, such as Crohn’s disease, as well as chronic serious liver disease and chronic allergic syndromes, including eosinophilic esophagitis. When these formulas and vitamins are ordered by a physician, they constitute the patient’s medical treatment. Yet, far too often insurance companies wrongly label medically necessary foods as “groceries,” denying children a risk-free and cost-effective pathway to treat and manage their diseases.

Particularly for children with Crohn’s disease, the Medical Nutrition Equity Act would establish coverage parity giving parents the ability to choose a treatment option that is best for their child in consultation with their pediatric specialist. Medical formulas are routinely denied by insurance companies for the management of Crohn’s disease, while costly biologics are approved. When an insurance company does cover a medical formula, it typically comes with the stipulation that the formula be administered through a tube surgically placed in the child’s gut or through the nose. These types of coverage policies are not rational and they interfere with thoughtful medical decision making.

For many families, the out-of-pocket costs for specialized formulas are prohibitive. Depending on the type of formula, the cost per month can range from about \$270-\$1500. When families can’t afford these formulas, it is the child who suffers, medically, psychologically and socially.

NASPGHAN thanks Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Representatives John Delaney (D-MD) and Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) for their critical leadership on this important issue. Passage of the Medical Nutrition Equity Act will have a profound effect on the future of the children whose health and ability to thrive depend on medically necessary foods.

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