

Resolution 26-103

Declaring Ultra-Processed Food a Primary Driver of the Pediatric Chronic Disease Epidemic and Calling for Nutritional Standards Reform in Federal Food Assistance Programs

Emerald Coast Medical Association

Whereas, The United States is experiencing an unprecedented epidemic of pediatric chronic disease, with rising rates of childhood obesity, Type 2 diabetes, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, hypertension, and cardiovascular risk factors representing a public health emergency with profound implications for the long-term health of the American population; and

Whereas, A CDC report published in August 2025 found that approximately 62% of the daily caloric intake of American children and adolescents is derived from ultra-processed foods (UPFs), with toddlers obtaining 47% and school-age children 59.4% of their daily calories from UPFs — representing a dramatic and ongoing displacement of whole and minimally processed foods from the American diet; and

Whereas, Peer-reviewed research, including a landmark randomized controlled trial conducted at the NIH, has demonstrated that subjects consuming a UPF diet consumed an average of 500 additional calories per day and gained an average of two pounds over a two-week period compared to subjects consuming an unprocessed diet matched for macronutrient content — establishing a causal, not merely associative, relationship between UPF consumption and excess caloric intake; and

Whereas, An umbrella review of epidemiological meta-analyses published in the British Medical Journal identified consistent associations between UPF consumption and 32 adverse health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease mortality, Type 2 diabetes, anxiety, depression, and all-cause mortality; and

Whereas, Ultra-processed foods are defined by the addition of industrial formulations — including emulsifiers, artificial flavors, colorants, preservatives, and other additives with no culinary equivalent — that are specifically engineered to override satiety signals and promote overconsumption, raising serious questions about whether UPF consumption can be characterized as freely chosen behavior; and

Whereas, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which serves over 42 million Americans at a cost of approximately \$100 billion annually in federal expenditures, currently permits the purchase of ultra-processed foods, candy, and sugar-sweetened beverages with no nutritional restrictions, such that federal funds are directly subsidizing the consumption of products whose health harms are well-established; and

Whereas, Florida has received federal waiver authority to implement SNAP nutritional restrictions, and as of January 2026, multiple states have enacted or received approval for restrictions on the purchase of nutritionally deficient foods with SNAP benefits — demonstrating that such restrictions are administratively feasible and legally permissible; and

Whereas, The medical profession has an obligation not only to treat the consequences of preventable chronic disease but to advocate for the systemic and policy conditions that allow disease prevention to occur at the population level; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Florida Medical Association declare ultra-processed food consumption a primary and addressable driver of the pediatric chronic disease epidemic in Florida and the United States; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the FMA call upon the Florida Legislature and the Florida Department of Children and Families to pursue and fully implement SNAP nutritional standards that restrict the purchase of ultra-processed foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, and confectionery items with SNAP benefits, consistent with the waiver authority already granted to Florida; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the FMA call upon the United States Congress to reform the SNAP program to align federal food assistance purchasing standards with current nutritional science and established public health evidence; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the FMA supports the implementation of nutritional standards for school meals, childcare food programs, and federal feeding programs that limit the availability of ultra-processed foods to children in institutionalized settings; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the FMA communicate this resolution to the Florida Legislature, the U.S. Congressional delegation, the Florida Department of Health, and the American Medical Association.

Fiscal Note:

Description	Amount	Budget Narrative
300 Staff hours	\$60,000	Can be accomplished with current staff
Total	\$60,000	\$0 added to the operating budget

Fiscal notes are an estimate of the cost to implement a given Resolution. All Resolutions that are adopted by the House of Delegates will be referred to the FMA Committee on Finance and Appropriations for fiscal consideration.

Reference Committee: I – Health, Education and Public Policy