

**Statement on Cranberries**  
**H.R.5504, Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act**  
Congressman Thomas E. Petri  
July 14, 2010

I want to speak briefly about a concern I have about the nutrition standards provisions in the bill. The nutrition standards provisions would require the Secretary of Agriculture to define nutrition standards for foods sold in schools that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Specifically, I am concerned that the nutrition standards that would be promulgated by the Secretary under these provisions may unnecessarily exclude healthy foods like sweetened dried cranberries and cranberry juice.

There has been significant focus on the amount of added sugar in foods, particularly in the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's most recent report released last month for public comment. I am concerned, however, that the focus on added sugar fails to take into consideration that many foods have high levels of natural sugar. It is my understanding that the human body does not distinguish added sugars from natural sugars, and therefore it seems as if more emphasis should be given to the total amount of sugar in a given food as opposed to the sugar that has been added.

Cranberries have a low level of natural sugar and therefore are sweetened to make them more appealing. However, my understanding is that even with added sugar, many cranberry products, including sweetened dried cranberries and cranberry juice, contain less total sugar than other products such as 100 percent apple juice or dried fruits like raisins. It is also my understanding that numerous studies have shown that cranberry products provide additional health benefits, primarily related to maintaining urinary tract health. Unfortunately, however, the focus on added sugar means that cranberry products are considered unhealthy as a result of their added sugar while other products, which may have higher levels of total sugar, are considered healthy if consumed in moderation.

I understand that there is concern about changing the nutrition standards language at this point in the game as it is the product of many discussions between various groups involved in nutrition policy. However, I believe my concerns are legitimate, and while I will not offer an amendment on this today, I do look forward to working with the Chairman and Ranking Member on the possibility of including report language that might encourage the Secretary to consider some of the documented health benefits of consuming phytonutrient rich foods like cranberries, in addition to the recommendations included in the *Dietary Guidelines*. Separately, I am also planning on submitting comments on the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's most recent report to express my concerns about the report's focus on added sugar, and I would welcome other members to join me.

Thank you.