My name is Charles Baker, Executive Vice President and Chief Science Officer at the Sugar Association, Washington DC.

The Sugar Association was established in 1943 to educate the public about cane and beet sugar and its role in balanced diets and healthy lifestyles.

Based on the totality of scientific evidence, the Association endorses sugar as a safe, natural and beneficial ingredient that provides not only flavor but endows safety and essential functionality to foods.

We welcome this opportunity to address the 2015 Committee.

The Association and its members share the Committee’s concern about obesity and its detriment to long-term health, especially in children. We endorse rigorous scientific research, particularly randomized controlled trials, that provide the meaningful and unambiguous data required for dietary guidance.

The Association supports the view that foods lacking meaningful nutritional value should not be the centerpiece of one’s diet. However, recommendations based on hypothetical eating patterns lack the scientific rigor necessary for realistic dietary guidance. In fact, the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee acknowledged that such eating pattern constructs lack scientific testing. Lumping distinctive caloric sweeteners together, one cornerstone of the eating patterns scheme, is misleading since biological dissimilarities, beginning with those observed in pioneering work published in the 1960s, are ignored.

Generalized assertions that sugar supplies calories with few or no nutrients disregard the body of scientific evidence that sugar bestows the very palatability necessary for increased intakes of many healthy foods, especially by children. Recommending overly restrictive limits has the real potential of decreasing the consumption of nutrient-rich foods and its unintended consequence of reducing the quality of the American diet.

The Association respectfully asks that the 2015 Advisory Committee base its decisions on rigorous and unbiased research, and critically analyzed data, instead of the flood of hasty pronouncements of obesity-ending, silver bullets so common today. One fact learned over the past decades is obesity, and its related diseases, is a complex continuum whose resolution will require multiple strategies not one-dimensional beliefs. The Association urges the 2015 Advisory Committee to adhere to impartially appraised evidence even if these deliberations lead only to a call for further scientific investigation of the attributes of healthy diets.