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**Cc:**  
**Bcc:**  
**Subject:** Proposal for establishment of the Global Energy Balance Network.docx  
**Attachments:** Proposal for establishment of the Global Energy Balance Network.docx

This has been tweaked from an earlier doc used to sell the concept into the Company. With that—not perfect, but with the Statement of intent/purpose it can be tweaked to be the core proposal for those folks who want more info

Rhona

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## Establishing the Global Energy Balance Network (GEBN)

### 1. Where we are Today

There is a growing war between the public health community and private industry over how to reduce obesity. Sides are being chosen and battle lines are being drawn. The most extreme public health experts have gained traction with the media, with many policy makers, and with an increasing proportion of the general public. Despite a serious lack of scientific support, their strategies focus on government regulation to limit, tax or ban foods they consider to be unhealthy. They have gained national and international exposure by casting the public sector, particularly food companies as the villain, even likening them to tobacco companies.

*“The food industry, like other industries must be regulated to prevent excesses and to protect the public good. Left to regulate itself, industry has the opportunity, if not the mandate from shareholders, to sell more products irrespective of their impact on consumers. Government, foundations, and other powerful institutions should be working for regulation, not collaboration.”*

Kelly D. Brownell  
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University  
PLoS Medicine, July 2012

The food industry, not surprisingly, has strongly opposed efforts for stronger regulation on specific foods, preferring to focus on providing more information and education, focusing on diets as a whole and emphasizing physical activity. The industry has been forced to devote substantial resources to countering unreasonable proposals from public health extremists. Further, proactive efforts by the food industry to address obesity have been fragmented, with each company developing its own programs and initiatives. These efforts have not been linked between companies or with the academic or government communities. These efforts have been criticized as being self-serving. For example, efforts by food companies to increase physical activity – a good strategy – have been criticized as deflecting attention from food.

It is time to inject **sanity and reason** into the public debate. An escalating war between public health and industry will consume valuable resources and time that could be used to develop strategies that involve public health, industry and government each playing key roles in solutions. It is time to actively promote collaboration rather than regulation as the strategy most likely to be effective in reducing obesity. Further it is time to stop developing tactics based on emotion and start developing tactics based on the best science.

We have not been using our most valuable weapon – science. A great deal of outstanding research clearly shows that there are many factors involved in promoting obesity and inactivity. We are unlikely to have success in focusing on single factors and we cannot fail to consider both food intake and physical activity in reducing obesity. Also, without efforts to create demand for healthy options, healthy supply alone will not move the needle sufficiently.

It is important to emphasize that those proposing regulation as the only answer are few in number but highly visible and charismatic. Most of the people actually conducting and implementing obesity research are not inherently predisposed to support this view, but with the lack of alternative collaborative strategies, they do not actively oppose the view.

We have failed to develop a cohesive “reasonable collaborative strategy” as an alternative to strategies being proposed. We have failed in uniting the private sector with reasonable academics and public health experts to develop and support strategies that might have a chance of turning around the obesity epidemic. We have failed to link food with physical activity, whether that means linking food intake experts with physical activity experts or linking the food industry with the physical activity industry (or inactivity industry).

### 2. The Need

There is a need for a better strategy to address obesity and a “voice of reason” to counter the voices touting extreme solutions to the obesity problem...e.g., food is tobacco. The strategy will not aim to counter the unreasonable views as much as develop and visibly promote a reasonable view and reasonable solutions. The intent is to:

- Engage the silent majority of experts and to provide all sectors – government, industry, academic, NGOs - a seat at the table.
- Develop the best science-based strategies and solutions to reduce obesity, increase physical activity and advance health through collaborative efforts that will see these strategies and solutions activated.
- And, to package the approach in such a way as to be easily understood and distinct from the opposition...to provide the “alternative” that the silent majority can be vocal in their support and actions.

To do this we must clearly translate the science into initiatives and programs that work and we must secure the commitment of all stakeholders to support these strategies. Each sector must commit to act upon the best science and must be willing to take responsibility for accomplishing defined objectives.

There is also the need for a credible “honest broker” in this battle who can be a reliable and trusted source for a balanced, science based view. The majority of researchers, clinicians and public health experts are afraid to speak out as the dialog has become antagonistic. Personal attacks are common from extremists. There is a need for someone to present solutions based on both energy balance AND on the understanding of supply and demand. If science-based solutions can be developed and widely communicated, the silent majority will support them. The timing is good because it is clear that the public health strategies developed thus far have not worked. Now is the time to develop strategies that can unite academia, public health, government and the private sector. Now is the time to step out and change the conversation. Now is the time for something big.

### **3. The Global Energy Balance Network (GEBN)**

We propose to establish The Global Energy Balance Network to serve as a focal point for a new collaborative initiative to reduce obesity with strategies that are based on the science of energy balance and on an understanding of both individual and social/cultural behavioral motivation. The purpose of the GEBN is not simply to counter the public health extremists but rather to provide and promote energy balance strategies and targeted social/economic strategies (to build demand for healthier products and services) for addressing obesity that actually have a chance of working. We will counteract their shrill rhetoric indirectly, but forcibly with reasonable voices and with science-based strategies that make sense and that are consistent with cultural values.

### **4. It Must be Big and It Must be Collaborative**

While many have been advocating energy balance approaches to obesity, they have not spoken with a single voice nor have they communicated this message to the public. Our only chance of reducing obesity is to develop a collaborative strategy where government and industry work collaboratively with academic experts and community organizations. It is time to develop a framework for addressing obesity that reasonable scientists, the private sector, government, and community organizations can support. The best science suggests that such strategies must address energy intake and expenditure (physical activity), personal responsibility and policy, individual behavior and environmental modification, and supply and demand.

We have sufficient science to develop such a strategy based on the science of energy balance and on an understanding of human motivation, both individually and collectively. This strategy will give everyone – academia, public health, private industry, government, and other interested stakeholders – a seat at the table. We can reverse obesity in a generation, but it will require and demand a level of collaboration not previously seen in this field. Further, given the deepening penetration of extremist views, there is a high degree of urgency in moving this initiative forward.

### **5. The Global Energy Balance Network at Work**

The Global Energy Balance Network will consist of the following activities.

#### **Science and Training**

- Facilitate new thinking within the science of energy balance to develop innovative concepts that can be evaluated by energy balance scientists and used to develop effective programs.
- Advance energy balance as the appropriate framework for addressing obesity and unhealthy lifestyles.
- Serve as a convening body for collaboration across multiple sectors.
- Promote and publish existing energy balance research and facilitate new ideas/concepts.

#### **Strategy/Policy/Education**

- Devise, create and implement a multi-year advocacy “campaign” that serves as a counterforce to one-sided, regulation-driven proponents.
- Devise and test prototype policies and market based initiatives that serve to create an evidence base for the effectiveness of new approaches
- Deepen ties to industry, government, and community organizations to connect and promote best practices that are effective in terms of both policy and profit
- Develop and implement comprehensive education programs

#### **A. Facilitate new thinking within the science of energy balance to develop innovative concepts that can be evaluated by energy balance scientists and used to develop effective programs**

We believe the real solutions to obesity will come from an energy balance framework but we also believe real solutions have not yet been developed. We will develop an ongoing think tank where we engage with the top researchers and top thinkers to use the energy balance approach to develop new ways of addressing obesity. We have previous experience in engaging experts from different disciplines to come together to frame problems differently and to create new avenues for approaching complex and seemingly intractable problems like obesity. The GEBN will develop a series of key challenges or dilemmas that would be the focus of a series of white papers and by invitation-only forums. White papers produced will be used to stimulate new research and action plans for addressing obesity. These white papers will also be disseminated widely to help guide the field toward solutions to obesity based on the science of energy balance and up to date understanding of human motivation related to behavior change. Additionally we will host an invitation-only bi-annual summit focused on creating new thinking space. We envision having one think tank activity in year 1 and increasing to 2-3 activities per year in year 2+.

#### **B. Advance energy balance as the appropriate framework for addressing obesity and unhealthy lifestyles**

There is an urgent need to position GEBNs as the focus for new solutions to obesity. This will provide an alternative focus point for researchers, private industry and government. Substantial resources must be allocated for media exposure for the GEBN. This will not only provide recognition for the effort but will drive the right people in academia, the private sector and government to us. The GEBN needs to quickly establish itself as the place the media goes to for a comment on any obesity issue in the way they currently go to CSPI or the Rudd Center. The consistent message from the GEBN needs to be why an energy balance framework is the only framework that makes sense in addressing obesity. We need to quickly be seen as the voice of reason.

We must also be proactive in pushing this framework to scientific societies and at scientific meetings. We propose to develop a GEBN scholar’s program where we identify the most influential researchers using an energy balance approach and empower them to promote this approach in working with their academic

societies and using this approach in academic presentations. The GEBN will develop support materials for the GEBN scholars.

We will also proactively develop white papers, op-eds and “thought papers” to widely disseminate through a variety of channels that reach the public, academic, industry and government audiences.

We will look to establish partnerships with global organizations including, but not limited to, the American Society for Nutrition, ACSM, ECSS, The Obesity Society, ILSI, IFIC, IFT and others that would be sympathetic and supportive of our initiative and would highlight our message.

The GEBN Executive Director (Dr. John Peters), will emerge as the primary messenger for the energy balance approach. We will develop a board of directors that includes (among others) individuals willing to step forward and represent GEBN in national conversations about obesity. This would include people like Drs. Jim Hill, Greg Hand, Steve Blair, Willem van Mechelen, Wendy Brown, David Allison, Tim Church, Mike Loosemore, John Duperly, John Blundell and many others.

**C. Serve as a convening body for collaboration.**

We must take advantage of the fact that we have science on our side. We propose activities to promote the existing science and to show how it is contributing to development of strategies to address obesity. This will be done by compiling a database of existing research that supports the energy balance approach, organizing a yearly meeting where the best new research is presented and serving as a conduit to linking funding sources with innovative new research ideas.

The GEBN will be a convener for meetings that bring people together to support the energy balance approach. We anticipate organizing small and large meetings to bring academia, industry and government together and smaller meetings with individuals within and between those groups. The GEBN will be considered a fair and safe place for candid discussions about strategy to address obesity and unhealthy lifestyles.

**D. Promote and publish existing energy balance research and facilitate new research.**

The Institute will utilize a variety of communication mediums that will include a web site, social media, and on-going submissions to scientific and consumer publications. We anticipate building a large database of curated links and creating a network of continuing contributors. Over time we would expect our on-line database of articles and resources to be a top choice for journalists, researchers and policy analysts to visit.

**E. Devise, create and implement a multi-year advocacy “campaign” that serves as a counterforce to one-sided, regulation-driven proponents.**

Akin to a political campaign, we will develop, deploy and evolve a powerful and multi-faceted strategy to counter radical organizations and their proponents. Dr. John Peters will serve as the face of and spokesperson for this initiative. Public health extremists have worked to become visible spokespersons for their approach. Because of their visibility they get great media attention for their views. Dr. Peters and all engaged will emerge as spokespeople and the visible faces of the energy balance approach and we will continually look to exploit opportunities for international exposure.

**F. Devise and test prototype policies and initiatives that serve to create an evidence base for the effectiveness of new approaches**

There is a desperate need to put forth new strategies that look at the range of policy levers as well as approaches that rely heavily on market models for engaging consumers to improve their eating and activity behaviors. To date, the debate has been largely about regulating and restricting the food supply with little attention given to creating demand for healthier goods and services. Without sufficient demand, the marketplace cannot sustain a supply that reaches more than niche audiences. Ultimately, the marketplace will innovate to satisfy whatever demand is present or emerging and to date there is insufficient motive for people

to demand healthier goods and services at a high volume. The GEBN will study the sources of this collective motive that can be a catalyst for evolving demand toward healthier products and services.

We will develop policy approaches that support both building the demand side of the healthy behavior equation as well as leverage the energy balance framework for informing key components of the tactical plan. We will work with a variety of stakeholders to develop data on the effectiveness of such policies. Data on policy effectiveness at changing behavior or obesity incidence is a key piece missing from the regulation based approaches being widely spread in the media to reduce and prevent chronic disease.

**G. Deepen ties to industry and government to connect and promote best practices that are effective in terms of both policy and profit.**

*Educating policy makers at the International, National and Local levels*

We will develop strategies for educating policy makers about why the energy balance framework is the right way to approach obesity and about how policies could be developed based on this approach. Our tactics include one-on-one meetings with policy makers, meetings focused on energy balance and policy and white papers targeted toward policy makers.

*Government*

We will actively nominate GEBN scholars for key government panels and will develop educational information about energy balance for different levels of government.

*Industry*

We will propose a series of activities aimed at educating industry about the energy balance approach. This includes offering “training seminar” geared at teaching the energy balance approach and offering an industry internship where key individuals from industry spend time at the GEBN to understand energy balance in more detail.

**H. Develop and implement comprehensive education programs.**

The GEBN will devote considerable effort to education about the energy balance approach for addressing obesity. We will focus education efforts on several groups.

*Educating and training health professionals*

Drs. James Hill and Holly Wyatt at the University of Colorado developed the Centers for Research and Education (CORE) in the mid 1990s to educate health professional in addressing obesity. CORE was extremely successful in reaching a national audience of health care professionals interested in managing obesity. While CORE became part of the Obesity Society in 2009, the principles of CORE can be revived to create a strong program for using the energy balance approach to teach health care professionals how to address obesity. CORE was a collaboration of nine (9) academic medical centers and we propose to engage other academic medical centers in this effort. The goal is to replicate and scale this

*Educating journalists*

In 2012 the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center at the University of Colorado hosted a 3 day educational event for 20 of the leading health & wellness journalist in the country. The event was an enormous success and the journalists were enthusiastic about the information they received (about energy balance) and wrote a large number of stories about their experience. They all want to come back next year. We propose to have annual education conferences for health & wellness journalists across the globe.

Additionally, we have also hosted a 3 day meeting of the national fitness and health bloggers. The audience enthusiastically received the information and wrote many blogs about it. We believe such meetings can help to raise awareness and needs to be scaled globally on an annual basis.

Finally, we propose to develop a month-long internship for journalists (traditional or new media). A journalist would spend one month at various facilities and would spend time with researchers and would learn more about the energy balance approach to addressing the reduction/prevention of chronic disease and obesity. We would host 3 journalists for 1-month each in year 1 and would expand to 5 in years 2+.

#### The public

We will develop a website and use social media to reach the public in order to provide information and resources about the energy balance approach to addressing obesity. On the website, we will translate results of research studies to the public. This includes a critical examination of studies that propose weight management strategies.

### **I. Philosophy**

- Science based, evidence driven, energy balance framework as the guiding principle
- Solutions need to embrace both supply and demand elements
- Diversified funding
- Seek to engage wide range of stakeholders
- Play offense with alternative solutions...not defense defending the status quo
- Serious commitment from all sectors of society

### **J. Funding needs**

The Global Energy Balance Network will be established with an endowment of \$20,000,000. It is necessary to start with an endowment in order to allow for development of a long-term strategy and to avoid spending most of the time of the key leadership in fundraising. This endowment will allow a yearly operating budget of about \$1,000,000. The operating budget will be used to fund key personnel and to support the key activities listed above. We will raise additional funding on a project by project basis as needed. Ideally the funding source for the endowment should be diversified.

### **K. The Need to Act Now**

The time is now to establish the Energy Balance Institute. The national policies being developed are strongly influenced by a small number of outspoken public health activists. The “reasonable” silent majority does not vocally oppose these because they are unable to offer a clear science-based alternative. Simultaneously, the nation continues to get fatter. Current strategies aimed solely at regulation will not solve the problem and it is time to get serious in developing new collaborative approaches that can work in our culture and our society. The GEBN can be the source of the new thinking and new strategies leading to a new action plan for America that is consistent with deeply held cultural values, economic growth and prosperity for all.