

Opening Statement of Chairman Dan Burton
Government Reform Committee
Subcommittee on Human Rights & Wellness
Dietary Supplements: Nature's Answer to Cost-Effective Preventative
Medicine
Wednesday, September 22, 2004

I, along with millions of Americans, firmly believe that dietary supplements have been shown through credible scientific research and historical use to be of immeasurable benefit to human health.

As a regular consumer, I know firsthand the health benefits of using dietary supplements on a daily basis. Consequently, I proudly serve as Co-Chairman of the Congressional Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Caucus, along with my colleague Representative Dennis Kucinich of Ohio here in the House, and Senators Orrin Hatch of Utah and Tom Harkin of Iowa, who have been true champions on these issues in the Senate.

Together, we have worked hard in a bi-partisan fashion for the continued research and safety of all dietary supplements manufactured and sold in the United States. It remains our top priority to ensure that only the highest quality of products are made available to American consumers.

Given my role as Co-Chair of the CAM Caucus, as well as my duties as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, I am particularly concerned with how these products can be used as preventative measures to combat a multitude of life-threatening and debilitating medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and even preventable birth defects in infants.

The Subcommittee has invited some of the foremost experts on nutrition to discuss the proven health benefits of regular supplement usage. Dr. Jeffrey Blumberg, Professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University is with us today to explain the role of folic acid and other dietary supplements in the promotion of health and prevention of chronic diseases.

The Subcommittee also has the pleasure of hearing testimony from Dr. Barbara Levine (La-Veen), an Associate Professor of Nutrition in Medicine at the Weill (Wheel) College of Medicine at Cornell University, who will discuss two of the nutrients she has studied for a majority of her career: Omega – 3 Fatty Acids and Calcium.

Dr. Levine (La-veen) will also explain how these two nutrients are needed throughout the entire life cycle in the development and growth of the human body in addition to their use for prevention and treatment of a variety of diseases.

In addition to the scientifically proven health benefits of using dietary supplements correctly to promote a healthier lifestyle and curb disease, these products

can also offer substantial cost savings for our long-term National health care expenditures.

During our hearing today, a new study will be released regarding the cost savings of dietary supplements on the United States health care system. Dr. Allen Dobson, Senior Vice President of the Lewin Group, an independent health care consulting firm, is here with us today to discuss the conclusions of his study, which demonstrates that certain supplements provide an inexpensive and safe way to improve overall personal health and reduce health care expenditures.

A recent report published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) estimates that American consumers spend over \$18 billion annually on the over 29,000 supplements sold in the United States. In 1994, Congress passed, and the President signed into law the *Dietary Supplement Health Education Act*, commonly referred to as DSHEA. DSHEA prescribes the framework for how the Federal government ensures the safety and efficacy of dietary supplements sold in the United States.

Prior to DSHEA, dietary supplements were treated and regulated as traditional food products. Seeing a need for the Federal government to address the American consumer's growing interest in dietary products in conjunction with public safety, Congress overwhelmingly passed this legislation to make certain that all dietary health products sold in the United States are held to the highest and most stringent quality standards.

DSHEA ensures the safety of dietary supplements by requiring manufacturers to follow standards called “Good Manufacturing Practices,” or GMPs. Essentially, all ingredients in supplements sold in the United States must be previously approved by the FDA and listed on the product’s bottle label. In addition, distributors must follow strict guidelines on all claims that are made in regard to a particular product – this ensures consumers are equipped with the most accurate information regarding their supplements.

Dr. Paul Coates, Director of the Office of Dietary Supplements at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is here to talk about the Federal government’s research into dietary supplements, and how these products have been shown to provide for a healthier lifestyle both in children and adults.

In addition, Mr. Elliot Balbert, the President of the Dietary Supplement Education Alliance will be testifying before the Subcommittee to discuss the supplement industry’s efforts and continued support for the overwhelming need to ensure that consumers have access to balanced, science-based facts about dietary supplements.

Finally, we have the distinct pleasure of having a distinguished star of the stage and screen testifying before our Subcommittee today. Marilu Henner, is here with us to talk about her personal experiences using dietary supplements in attaining and maintaining optimal health. Ms. Henner has not only personally benefited from

supplement usage, but has also served as a health advocate and is the author of 6 books on how to live a healthier lifestyle.

Whether taking a multi-vitamin, herbal product, or specialty supplement, people can and do live healthier lives and save money in long-term health costs by supplementing their diets. I would like to thank all of our witnesses for their participation in this hearing, and I look forward to hearing their testimony.