

TESTIMONY OF MARILU HENNER

Before

The Subcommittee on Human Rights & Wellness
of the House Government Reform Committee

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Chairman Burton and Honorable Members of the Committee, I am Marilu Henner, actress, author and health advocate. As a consumer who recognizes the value of dietary supplements, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

I would like to provide testimony on why I believe it is important for consumers to have **information about dietary supplements**, and to have **access to supplements through their government and private health plans**. The information and access is important in order to help people make better decisions and lead healthier lives than is possible through a healthy diet alone. That is why I believe that dietary supplements should be part of a campaign to improve our nation's health.

I feel qualified to say that because I am not only the author of six best-selling books promoting a healthy lifestyle, but I am also known as one of the healthiest eaters in Hollywood. I believe that healthy food without dietary supplements is not enough. It is

not always possible to get everything we need from our food; no matter how carefully we plan our diet.

Before I get into my personal story, I'd like to talk first about the need for

information. According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately 400,000 Americans a year die as a result of an unhealthy diet and a sedentary lifestyle. While I personally think this estimate is low, it's high enough for us to recognize that something must be done to get people moving and eating better. As the waistline of the average American continues to expand, illnesses related to obesity, such as diabetes and heart disease are reaching epidemic proportions. People are stuffing themselves with processed foods and fast food while they are literally starving their bodies of the nutrients they need. The solution for too many people is fad diets that only perpetuate their unhealthy eating habits.

As I have described in several of my books, I was raised on the Standard American Diet, and spent many years yo-yo dieting as I tried to control my weight. The result of course, was that I was consistently in bad health and never could control my weight eating that way. Both of my parents died in their fifties of diseases associated with poor diet. As I have since learned, my father's heart disease could have probably been mitigated using Vitamin E, and the severity of my mother's arthritis could have been alleviated using Calcium and/or glucosamine. My parents' deaths were the impetus for my never-ending quest for better health for myself, my siblings, my children and anyone else who would listen.

My journey to good health took many years. Mine was a story of trial and error, because it was so difficult in the 1970's and 80's to find information about optimizing health through diet and supplements. There is more information now than ever before about health, but unfortunately the same chatter about fad diets and miracle drugs drowns out the sound information that people should be getting. I believe that people are ready to take the right steps toward becoming healthy, but without the proper guidance and the support of their insurance providers, health organizations, and the federal government, they will continue to be led into seeking false solutions. One of my goals as an author is to show people the way to optimize their health, by encouraging them to disregard false solutions such as drastic weight loss with no sacrifice, or better health through miracle pills.

Through my many personal appearances advocating good health, my books, and my Web site at Marilu.com, I come into contact with and mentor thousands of people who are on their own quest for good health. I hear many personal accounts of how people have turned their lives around, from debilitating illness to vibrant health, when they get the information needed to make good choices. By good choices, I mean specifically rejecting the manufactured foods of our society, with their over-reliance on sugar, meat and dairy and the chemicals, hormones and steroids that usually accompany these products. Instead we should be moving towards an organic, vegan diet that produces a sense of physical well-being. I also believe that a healthy diet includes the use of appropriate dietary supplements.

Finally, I'd like to describe why I think it's important to have access to dietary

supplements. When I was pregnant with my first son, I began to take prenatal vitamins and supplements, and found that I felt better than ever before. I continued to take dietary supplements after my pregnancy to benefit from the essential nutrients that I knew I couldn't get from food alone, even though I'm committed to a very healthy diet. I was lucky enough to have a doctor who not only understood the value of dietary supplements, but also encouraged me to use them to maintain my health.

Since then, I have taken dietary supplements each day, and I recommend them to my family and friends, as well as in my books and classes. The general public needs more access to dietary supplements to maintain essential good health. Supplements are the result of American research and development, but for some reason, they have been stigmatized by the American Medical Association and the drug companies. As a result, most Americans do not have access to these supplements because they are not covered by their health plans, nor recognized as effective by the federal government. I think this needs to be changed.

In closing, I want to thank the committee for examining this issue and inviting me to speak today. I would like to encourage you make this information on dietary supplements available to all Americans so that the health of the American public can be improved.

I wish you all the best of health.