



**Testimony of Blake Selzer, Director of Government Relations, Edesia
Nutrition before the House Appropriations Committee
National Security and Department of State – Outside Witness Day**

April 02, 2025

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Frankel, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Blake Selzer, and I represent Edesia Nutrition, a non-profit social enterprise based in Rhode Island dedicated to a single goal: ending global malnutrition in children.

I would like to first take this opportunity to thank this committee for its inclusion of \$300 million for the procurement of American-made Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) in last year's FY25 State, Foreign Operations bill. While we were not able to get it across the finish line last year, we hope this year will be different. We respectfully request that same amount this year: **\$300 million in the FY2026 National Security, State Department bill** for the procurement and programming of RUTF.

RUTF, also known as Plumpy'nut, is used in the treatment of severe acute malnutrition. It is a highly fortified peanut butter that is highly effective in emergency settings, because it delivers lifesaving nutrition, is easy to distribute in complex humanitarian crises, allows mothers to treat their children at home, and has the power to rehabilitate 90% of children in just two months.

Edesia Nutrition is one of only two producers in the U.S. manufacturing RUTF and other specialized foods that treat malnutrition. Edesia works to combat malnutrition worldwide while sourcing essential raw materials, including peanuts, soy, dairy, and sugar from U.S. farmers and suppliers across more than 25 states, and we use American shippers, and NGOs to deliver our life-saving foods. They all play a critical role in our collaborative effort to end child malnutrition. We represent the best of America First and feed the children of the world.

We recognize the fiscal constraints faced by the Committee. As a manufacturing company, Edesia is an expert in efficiency. We are currently working with the Trump administration on dozens of improvements allowing us to deliver measurable impact, work more cost effectively, and in the end reach more children with less dollars.

We want to fight famines, not families. Families will always remember that it was the American people who were there during their greatest time of need.

The work we and our partners do makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. America is safer because improving food security leads to national security and reduces conflict and migration. America is stronger because we create jobs and economic opportunity. America is more prosperous because humanitarian organizations in the U.S. buy hundreds of millions of dollars of commodities from American farmers and businesses.

What we make is not just nice to have for the people we serve, it is the equivalent to penicillin and can be the difference between life and death. To date, we have produced ready-to-use foods for 26 million children and mothers in 65 countries, and we aren't stopping now, because children can't wait. Malnutrition is the leading cause of death for children under the age of five, claiming a child's life every 11 seconds. Children who survive often have life-altering developmental challenges, severely limiting their potential.

Annually, \$1.7 billion is needed to feed 17 million severely malnourished children around the world, this is the same cost as just two and a half B-21 stealth bomber aircrafts. A mere \$100 per child covers the cost of a box of RUTF, distribution, and access to community healthcare.

While we take pride in saving the lives of children suffering from acute severe malnutrition worldwide, the long-term goal needs to be a shift to prevention. At Edesia, we are committed to this and are currently in the process of expanding the capacity of our production facility through the generous support of a private philanthropy. Once completed, this will enable us to double our efforts (output), producing not only RUTF, but also other nutritional foods to prevent children from becoming severely malnourished in the first place.

We know that you have tough choices to make with a limited budget, but we also know that child malnutrition is 100% preventable, we just need the political will to do it. There are many problems in this world we cannot solve, malnutrition is not one of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to answer any questions that you have.