

MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN KENTUCKY TASK FORCE

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

October 15, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fifth meeting of the Make America Healthy Again Kentucky Task Force was held on October 15, 2025, at 3:00 PM in Room 169 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Co-Chair; Senators Cassie Chambers Armstrong, Donald Douglas, Craig Richardson, and Phillip Wheeler; and Representatives Emily Callaway, Adam Moore, and Marianne Proctor.

Guests: Jonathan Shell, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA); Hollie Harris, President, Chief Executive Officer, Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH); Jim Musser, Esq., Senior Vice President, Policy and Government Relations, Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA); Heather Norman-Burgdolf, PhD, Associate Extension Professor, Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, University of Kentucky (UK); and Courtney Luecking, PhD, MPH, RDN, LD, Assistant Extension Professor, Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, UK.

LRC Staff: DeeAnn Wenk, Logan Bush, Cameron Franey, and Becky Lancaster.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2025, meeting was made by Representative Proctor, seconded by Senator Douglas, and approved by voice vote.

Food is Medicine

Jim Musser, Esq., Senior Vice President, Policy and Government Relations, KHA, discussed the partnership with KDA and ARH, and goals for better health outcomes.

Jonathan Shell, Commissioner, KDA, discussed how the Food Is Medicine program is increasing rural prosperity and profitability through local farmer partnerships with ARH and KHA, removing barriers to participation for farmers and hospitals, obtaining grants for post-patient care, and medically integrated meals.

Hollie Harris, President, Chief Executive Officer, ARH, discussed the ARH workforce, improvements made for healthier meal choices for ARH staff, partnerships established for local produce and proteins, use of local farmer's markets and the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, and the lack of insurance reimbursement for ARH programs.

In response to Chair Funke Frommeyer, Commissioner Shell stated CSA is a subscription food box program. Ms. Harris stated the Food Is Medicine and CSA programs are investments in their workforce, and ARH is tracking the health outcomes from the programs.

In response to Senator Wheeler, Ms. Harris stated ARH is self-insured for the employee's healthcare. Commissioner Shell stated KDA is focusing on finding local profitability and market availability for farmers and could look into prison employment as a resource.

In response to Representative Moore, Ms. Harris discussed tracking hospital readmission rates and the investment in nutrition education for physicians and mid-level employees. Commissioner Shell discussed the need for more centralized data collection and an outcome tracking system, sustainability of programs without federal funding but with private insurance, recruitment retention opportunities for employers, and meetings with Secretary Rollins and Secretary Kennedy regarding pilot projects for school nutrition, food insecurity, and medically tailored food reimbursement programs.

In response to Senator Chambers Armstrong, Ms. Harris discussed the purpose of nutrition education for physicians and mid-level employees, and garden boxes for employee participation. Commissioner Shell discussed creating an intentional process for nutrition education at higher education levels, CSAs having extra capability for increased demand, and investments in specialty crops.

In response to Representative Callaway, Commissioner Shell stated he wants to work together with legislators on new legislation regarding funding, reimbursements, and waivers from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

In response to Representative Proctor, Commissioner Shell stated he has seen buy-in and immediate impact from all hospital partnerships, with additional opportunities from philanthropic organizations to serve more people. Ms. Harris discussed having cooking classes to show patients how to prepare fruits and vegetables, healthy tool giveaways for employees, and providing gym memberships to employees.

Food Deserts and Nutrition Education

Heather Norman-Burgdolf, PhD, Associate Extension Professor, Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, UK, discussed cooperative extension services, outcomes for youths and adults reached by nutrition education provided by the cooperative extension office, youth summer nutrition camps, addressing food insecurity with tools and knowledge to harvest and prepare food, and extension services' statistical information.

Courtney Luecking, PhD, MPH, RDN, LD, Assistant Extension Professor, Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, UK, discussed food security and nutrition education definitions, then strategies and programs used to make improvements in communities for various ages.

In response to Chair Funke Frommeyer, Dr. Luecking stated the One Big Beautiful Bill Act eliminated federal funding for supplemental nutrition education program that caused 85 employment positions within Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment to be eliminated. Dr. Norman-Burgdolf stated the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is still available.

In response to Representative Moore, Dr. Norman-Burgdolf stated the cooperative extension service creates and purchases educational resources and materials that are available for county agents to select for specific local needs and there are internal reporting systems and evaluation tools to share the data collected. Dr. Luecking stated communities are leveraging resources and partnerships that are more beneficial to their area.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 PM.