

February 4, 2021

**FROM:** SARA BLEICH  
Senior Advisor for COVID-19  
USDA

**TO:** Stuart Bender  
Designated Agency Ethics Official and  
Director, Office of Ethics  
USDA

**SUBJECT:** Ethics Agreement

The purpose of this letter is to acknowledge my obligation to avoid any actual or apparent conflicts of interest with my duties as Senior Advisor for COVID-19. The following agreement is designed to address potential ethics issues identified by the Office of Ethics based upon its review of the information I provided in my OGE 278 Public Financial Disclosure report. This agreement may be modified by the agency as it deems necessary.

#### AGREEMENT

I understand that I am responsible to know the ethics rules applicable to me and to abide by those rules. I understand that a change in my circumstances may precipitate the need for an ethics agreement that specifically addresses the issue(s) raised by the circumstance.

As required by 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that has a direct and predictable effect on my financial interests or those of any person whose interests are imputed to me, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). "Particular matter," for purposes of this paragraph, includes not only matters involving a specific proceeding affecting the legal rights of the parties, such as contracts, claims, controversies, investigations, grants, loans, agreements, litigation, and other arrangements involving a specific party or parties, but also legislation, regulation, broad policymaking, and program development that are focused on a particular sector or the interests of a discrete and identifiable class of persons. I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me: any spouse or minor child of mine; any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner; any organization in which I serve as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee; and any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment. By law, this means that all financial interests of these persons are considered to be mine as if I owned them personally.

On January 19, 2021, before entering Federal service, I took an unpaid leave of absence from my position as Professor of Public Health Policy at the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of Harvard University, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for either the exemption for employees on leave from institutions of higher learning allowing participation in certain matters of general applicability at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.203(b), or another regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2).

On January 19, 2021, I resigned from my positions with the following entities:

- Weight Watchers (WW International, Inc.), Scientific Advisory Board Member

- VAL Health LLC, Scientific Advisory Board Member

Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, for a period of one year after my resignation from each of these entities, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

#### Biden Administration Ethics Pledge Commitments

On January 20, 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order titled “Executive Order on Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel.” Among other things, this Executive Order requires every “appointee” in each executive agency appointed on or after January 20, 2021, to sign the Ethics Pledge established therein. I understand that as a Biden Administration appointee I must continue to abide by the Ethics Pledge that I signed on January 26, 2021. I am bound by its requirements and restrictions in addition to the commitments I have made in this ethics agreement, which may overlap. Of particular note in the Ethics Pledge is the following provision:

*I will not for a period of 2 years from the date of my appointment participate in any particular matter involving specific parties that is directly and substantially related to my former employer or former clients, including regulations and contracts.*

The Ethics Pledge contains a more expansive definition of “particular matter involving specific parties” than that set forth in section 2641.201(h) of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations. More specifically, under the Ethics Pledge, the term “particular matter involving specific parties” also includes any meeting or other communication relating to the performance of one’s official duties with a former employer or former client, unless the communication applies to a particular matter of general applicability and participation in the meeting or other event is open to all interested parties. As such, I will not meet with the following former clients nor otherwise participate in any particular matter involving specific parties that is directly and substantially related to those entities for two years after the date of my appointment:

- 1) Weight Watchers (WW International, Inc.)
- 2) VAL Health LLC

I believe that the above actions will serve to keep my free from any actual or apparent violation of conflicts laws and regulations. This agreement is effective immediately. If I have any questions regarding the scope or application of this agreement, I will consult the USDA Office of Ethics.

I have been advised that this ethics agreement, as well as my OGE Form 278 Public Financial Disclosure Report, will be available to the public upon request, consistent with ethics agreements and OGE Form 278s of other employees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

**Sara Bleich** Digitally signed by Sara Bleich  
Date: 2021.02.04 10:24:52  
-05'00'

Sara Bleich  
Senior Advisor for COVID-19  
U.S. Department of Agriculture