Opinion paper addressing government involvement with families as a consumer; concentrating on food production, regulation, consumption, and marketing by providing explanations regarding the negative current role of the government, existing health risks, consequences of consuming harmful foods, and possible solutions for government involvement which will benefit families.
The future health of this nation is appearing bleak if this government’s ignorance toward food, its production, regulation, and consumption, is allowed to continue its current trend and downward path. There exist an overwhelming number of foods available to the consumer; however, there also exist an overwhelming number of dangers in the majority of these foods. Due to the super-saturation of products available, it is nearly impossible, even as an educated consumer, to know and understand every risk attached to each product. Therefore, due to this saturation of products, it should be the responsibility of the Federal Government to ensure the safety of the consumer and not the consumer’s responsibility to self-educate; “caveat emptor” simply will not satisfy this dangerous situation. The Federal Government should have more involvement and better regulations concerning food production to commission and secure healthier products and choices for families as the consumer to obtain, therefore ensuring the immediate and prospective health of the families. To address this thesis, explanations will be given regarding the negatives as the current role of the government, existing health risks, the consequences of consuming dangerous foods, and possibilities for positive government involvement which will benefit the family.

In this context, the consumer and the family are interchangeable, they are inherently synonymous. Yet when approached from the government’s perspective, the use of the word “consumer” rather than addressing “the family” makes it easier to detach emotion, such as feelings of sympathy or compassion. Rather than stating “buyer beware,” maybe if we as a society said “family beware” the topic of food safety would demand more attention.

Although this role of government may be viewed as abstract and indirect relative to family life, it directly affects the immediate and future health of each member of the family physically, mentally, and financially. Today, the government’s perspective is very much one of “caveat emptor” or buyer beware.
If the government were to take a more involved role in positive regulations by which foods are produced, such as limiting or completely prohibiting artificial hormones, use of antibiotics, additives, trans-fats, harmful chemicals, pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMO’s), and the GRAS list, families would not have to be concerned when eating at a fast food restaurant or shopping at a supermarket. Whether or not these means can be granted by engaging more involvement and regulation over the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or by creating and entrusting other federally sanctioned parties, the direction, approach and general attitude must be drastically changed.

We are a consumer nation, therefore the quantity and variety of products available exceeds those demanded. However, this does not permit the right to allow for potentially dangerous foods to be made easily available to the consumer and therefore families. We are a consumer nation, because of this there is a Darwinist approach to work ethic in order to survive the capitalist ideals we found this nation’s economy upon. In order to survive, there is a constant driving force compounded with limited time available to constantly work to be able to afford society’s “comfortable” lifestyle and provide primarily for the immediate and, secondarily, extended family. In order to continue this standard of living, often both parents must work to provide for the family further limiting time available to direct attention to dietary intake, let alone the self-education of nutritional quality and potential health risks. Most families don’t have the luxury of time necessary for “family dinners” between their hectic schedules.

What are the potential risks attached with the currently available foods which are violating the family’s health? Aside from the lack of warning these foods should be mandated to wear, type II Diabetes, obesity, Binge Eating Disorder, cardiac infarctions, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, sleep apnea, insomnia, vitamin deficiency, cancer, Attention Deficit Disorder, hyperactivity, depression, and Bipolar Disorder to name a few.
To further explain why these health risks, or consequences, occur, we must first understand the lack of government regulation allowing for the production of foods which will directly cause these detrimental effects that devastate families.

The current idea of business is quantity, not quality. It’s the volume of the individual product portion as well as the total products made available in the shortest period of time possible. The effect this is having on food, specifically perishables, is that we are getting a larger product, or portion size, with more alterations from GMO’s, chemicals, pesticides, hormones, and artificial additives but less nutrients including vitamins and minerals. In order to maintain adequate intake of the vitamins and minerals the human body needs to avoid vitamin deficient ailments we must consume more product portion volume. Put bluntly, diseases such as scurvy which results from vitamin C deficiency, should not be happening in America today, but it is becoming more prominent due to a lack of regulation of the food industry as a whole entity.

The FDA, a government established food regulation administration, has failed us as a society to protect families from harmful substances being used on and in our foods. In 1958, they passed the Food Additives Amendment which led to the creation of the “GRAS” list, meaning Generally Regarded as Safe. This was initially created as a positive entity to prohibit the use of extremely harmful substances being used with food. The substances are prohibited from being used if a direct “intended use” can be harmful as proven by scientists. An example can best illustrate where this fails our society. Take the example of Sweet & Low, an artificial sweetener containing aspartame, which has been linked to cancer, as well as a lesson I learned in a nutrition class in which aspartame is converted and stored in the body as formaldehyde, also known as embalming fluid. Often times, aspartame is used in diet drinks which society gives its children, and parents use Sweet & Low in their morning coffee to “count calories.” The GRAS list implicates that this product should be used in moderation, however even one diet soda or
morning coffee a day is 365 “moderate uses” per year, and that is not moderate and is dangerous and illustrates a direct failure of the government to ensure our safety. The point being, the majority of consumers and families are not educated to this degree of every product made available, yet the government’s lack of involvement in its prohibition allows for the continuation of such hazardous productions under the illusion that it is “generally safe.”

How will these foods directly cause detrimental effects that devastate families? Bovine Growth Hormone in milk and beef leads to early onset of puberty in children, secondarily leading to increased risk of cancer. Antibiotics in poultry lead to immune resistance and renders antibiotics ineffective for medical use. Red dye # 40 in candy is linked to Attention Deficit Disorder and hyperactivity. Trans-fats in fast food and processed goods cause obesity, cardiac infarctions, hypertension and high cholesterol. Corn is treated with atrazine, an endocrine disruptor, and genetically modified 2,4-D also known as “Agent Orange” included in the pesticide in its DNA; This is the same corn used to feed the steer we consume as beef (which would not eat corn naturally of its own accord), chickens and turkeys, and pigs, and high fructose corn syrup in fruit drinks, soda, candy, etc. which can lead to type II Diabetes, as well as the use of artificial sweeteners. Vitamin and mineral deficient perishable goods can cause depression, Bipolar Disorder, and scurvy. The list is endless but instead of correcting the problem, the government says this list is preventable and places blame on the consumer and family, or creates another pill with a secondary list of problems to correct the first.

This epidemic of health afflicting children, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, and grandparents has a direct relation to the food our nation produces as deemed safe by the government. Safe food is a preventative medicine of all the ailments listed prior. Healthy food contains vitamins and minerals which are not produced within the human body therefore they must be consumed to continue the proper functions of every cell, tissue, organ and organ system. The health epidemic related to food is not
addressed because the threats are eminent however not immediate, there is rarely acute onset; these problems are slow to surface but persistent once accrued.

The possibility for positive government involvement which will benefit the family exists through the availability of healthy, unaltered and organic foods. The problem herein lies with the cost of such foods compared with the financial status of families. The limited production of organic and unaltered foods leaves little room for competition which allows high cost. If more locations, such as fast food restaurants, supermarkets, and farmers markets, were to carry more choices and volume, the prices would have a better chance of being driven down through the laws of supply and demand. This could also be influenced with government support, such as tax breaks for businesses which carry and support these products and removing the taxes on such products for the consumer. If the government were to become involved in the prohibition of harmful substances used with food, it would eliminate a need for educating the consumer and family, even the labeling of products containing such substances along with possible effects would be an effective method for educating. It makes little sense that products such as over-the-counter medications a parent can purchase contains labeling educating as to possible side effects, yet food we consider to be safe can have detrimental side effects with no warning label. Education can best be applied to young children in early pursuits of their own educations, the young impressionable minds of society’s children should learn which foods are beneficial and which are dangerous. This lesson can then be passed to generations they produce, their children, their children’s children, and hopefully we can undo all the harm our government has ignorantly inflicted upon our families.

In conclusion, the Federal Government should have more involvement and better regulations concerning food production to commission and secure healthier products and choices for families to
obtain, therefore ensuring the immediate and prospective health of the families by eliminating and educating existing health risks, the consequences of consuming dangerous foods, and possibilities for positive government involvement.