September 21, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned, urge you to cosponsor the National School Food Marketing Assessment Act sponsored by Representatives Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) and Todd Platts (R-PA). We strongly support this bill, which calls for a much-needed national study on the nature and extent of food marketing in U.S. schools.

According to the National Academies’ Institute of Medicine, food marketing influences children’s attitudes, food choices, diets, and health. Since children spend more time in schools than in any other setting outside of their homes, the types and amount of foods and beverages marketed in schools is of interest.

Last year, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a report on food marketing expenses by 44 of the biggest food marketers to youth. According to the FTC, companies report that they spent $186 million on in-school food and beverage marketing in 2006, which represented 11% of all food marketing expenses to youth. However, the FTC study did not provide details on the types and amounts of foods marketed in schools. In addition, the FTC did not describe the differences in marketing in elementary versus middle and high schools. We need an observational study that looks at the nature and extent of food marketing in schools, by school level.

A national school food marketing study would provide important information about the current state of food marketing in schools to parents, teachers, school administrators, health professionals, and local, state, and national policymakers. We hope you will join Representatives McCarthy (D-NY) and Platts (R-PA) in cosponsoring the National School Food Marketing Assessment Act.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Diabetes Association
American Dietetic Association
American Heart Association
American Medical Athlete Association
American Running Association
American School Health Association
American Society of Transplantation
Be Active New York State
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
California Food Policy Associates
California WIC Association
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
Cancer Project
Center for Communications, Health & the Environment
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children Now
Common Sense Media
Community Food Security Coalition
Community Health Partnership: Oregon’s Public Health Institute
Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
Corporate Accountability International
David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, Prevention Research Center, Yale University School of Medicine
David V.B. Britt, CEO, Retired, Sesame Workshop
Elizabeth Derecktor, Spirit Wear
The Endocrine Society
Farm Sanctuary
FGE Food and Nutrition Team
Fitness Forward
Food Trust
Healthy Schools Campaign
Hunter College Program in Nutrition
IDEA Health and Fitness Association
Institute for America's Health
Kathryn Montgomery, PhD, American University
National Action Against Obesity
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Parent Teacher Association
National Physicians Alliance
New York Coalition for Healthy School Food
Oral Health America
Partners for a Healthy Nevada
Partnership for Prevention
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Praxis Project
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Produce Marketing Association
Public Good
Researchers against Inactivity-related Disorders
Samuels & Associates
Shape Up America!
Sustainable Food Center
Trust for America's Health
Wound Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society
Young People’s Healthy Heart Program at Mercy Hospital