June 29, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Lina Khan, Chair
The Honorable Rebecca Slaughter, Commissioner
The Honorable Alvaro Bedoya, Commissioner
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Investigation of Food Marketing to Children Expenditures

In the fiscal year 2023 House Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill report, Congress directed the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to report on the marketing activities and expenditures of the food industry targeted toward children and adolescents by June 29, 2023. Particularly, Congress directed the FTC to investigate food marketing expenditures related to food and beverage marketing targeting children and adolescents of color, digital food and beverage marketing and data practices targeting children and adolescents, and food and beverage advertising on educational technology platforms. The undersigned organizations and researchers respectfully request that the FTC follow through with Congress’s directive in a timely manner.


In the decade since the last of these reports was published, we have seen an increased investment in marketing and advertising in digital media, which is often reliant on consumer data and complex algorithms for success. Furthermore, in 2021, Black youth viewed more television advertisements for food and beverages than their White peers after accounting for differences in television viewing times. In 2021, food and beverage companies spent a greater proportion of total television advertising spending on Spanish-language television compared to 2017. In addition, there is evidence of food advertising on online educational platforms that were recommended for use during remote learning and may be included in teachers’ lesson plans.

An updated report on food industry marketing activities and expenditures targeted towards children and adolescents will be critical to shedding light on how these advertising practices are adversely impacting youth, especially youth of color.
The FTC’s 6(b) authority uniquely positions the agency to provide insight on these large food marketing expenditures and evolving marketing tactics, which otherwise remain largely unknown. Therefore, we urge you to follow Congress’s directive to publish an updated report on food marketing expenditures targeted toward children and adolescents. We appreciate your attention to these issues and would like to meet with those working on the report to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Berkeley Media Studies Group
Center for Science in the Public Interest
ChangeLab Solutions
Fairplay
Healthy Food America
Healthy Savannah
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)
Prevention Institute
Public Health Advocacy Institute
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness
Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Corporate Responsible Investments
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Barry Popkin
Global Food Policy Research Program
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Christina A. Roberto, PhD
Mitchell J. Blutt & Margo Krody Blutt Presidential Associate Professor of Health Policy
Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
David A. Cleveland
U of California

Ellen Wartella
Northwestern University

Faith Boninger
Research Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education; Co-Director of the Commercialism in Education Research Unit
Publications Manager of the National Education Policy Center

Gary A. Giovino
University at Buffalo, SUNY

Jennifer Falbe
Associate Professor of Nutrition and Human Development
UC Davis

Kaela Plank, MS, MPH

Kevin Welner
Professor
University of Colorado Boulder

Lisa R. Young, PhD, RDN
Adjunct Professor of Nutrition
NYU

Lori Dorfman
Adjunct Professor
School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley

Marion Nestle
New York University

Mary Story, PhD, RD
Professor
Duke University, Durham NC

Megan R. Winkler, PhD, RN

Shu Wen Ng, PhD
Walter Willett, MD, DrPH
Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition
Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

6 Harris, 2022.