



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
**Commission on Children**



**Testimony before the Committee on Children on Proposed S.B. No. 956 and  
H.B. 6898**

**Submitted by Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director  
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**March 3, 2015**

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and Members of the Children's Committee:

My name is Elaine Zimmerman. I am the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Children and I am here today to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 956, An Act Expanding the Care 4 Kids Program and House Bill 6898, An Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in Schools.

Senate Bill 956 allows Care 4 Kids services for a parent or caretaker who is attending an institution of higher education. This is a model two-generational policy, in that it allows for a pathway to work through higher education for the parent, while assuring quality care for the child.

Low-income families have not lifted up and out of the Great Recession in Connecticut. Eighty thousand children under the age of five live in low-income households. Of these households, 60 percent have no parent working full-time, year-round. Fully 80 percent of the parents in these households have no post-high school degree. Fifteen percent of Connecticut families with children have a head of household without a high school diploma.

Senate Bill 956 provides more seamless service through a twelve month, rather than an eight month, eligibility determination. It also promotes collaboration across departments, including Social Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Children and Families, Developmental Services and Public Health. The agencies will implement an information sharing process on services and benefits. This shared information helps the family as a unit and impedes a fragmented response to the consumer.

The Commission on Children also supports H.B. No. 6898, An Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in Schools. This proposed legislation is the logical next step in a process begun nearly a decade ago. Connecticut and the General Assembly were national leaders in removing unhealthy beverages from our children's schools in 2006.

This step, coupled with the State Department of Education's Healthy Food Certification program, are policies that have contributed to a healthy eating environment for school children. These steps are contradicted by allowing the marketing in schools of the food and beverage products our schools have removed. House Bill 6898 ensures the food messaging students experience at school does not undo the success achieved in school nutrition policy.

The Institute of Medicine informs us that the marketing in schools of foods of poor nutritional value to students contributes to child obesity by affecting food preferences, choices, and diet.<sup>1</sup> School-based marketing occurs often without parents being aware of it, or having the ability to limit it. Many studies have shown that parents support limits on in-school marketing of unhealthy food.

There is much to applaud in efforts to improve the nutritional quality of food served and sold to students. Improvements are linked to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, where Congress instructed the Department of Agriculture to improve nutritional standards for meals served and purchased during the school day.<sup>2</sup> These policy changes were built upon a 2006 federal initiative instructing school administrators to create wellness policies that included standards to address the nutritional value of foods available during the school day.<sup>3</sup>

But these federal efforts did not address marketing practices. The Federal Trade Commission found that in 2009 food and beverage manufacturers spent nearly \$186 million on youth-directed in-school marketing.<sup>4</sup> The marketing techniques are diverse and at times very subtle. A report published in 2010 by the National Education Policy Center, *Effectively Embedded: Schools and the Machinery of Modern Marketing*, pointed to methods used by the food industry to create brand awareness with students. Strategies include branded food sales; direct advertising on school property and facilities (through television, radio, posters, and print advertising); exclusive agreements to sell only products from a particular manufacturer; sponsorship of school programs, incentive programs, and supplementary educational materials; fundraising programs; free samples and coupon giveaways; and digital marketing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, Committee on Food Marketing and the Diets of Children and Youth. 2006. Food Marketing to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity? Washington, DC: National Academies Press, <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2005/Food-Marketing-to-Children-and-Youth-Threat-or-Opportunity.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> 42 U.S.C. 1779(b). <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/1779>

<sup>3</sup> Federal Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L.108-265), 42 U.S.C. 1758b. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/108-265.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Federal Trade Commission, supra note 8 at 23-24. <http://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/marketing-food-children-and-adolescents-review-industry-expenditures-activities-and-self-regulation/p064504foodmktngreport.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Molnar A, Boninger F, Wilkinson G, Fogarty J, and Geary S. Effectively Embedded: Schools and the Machinery of Modern Marketing – The Thirteenth Annual Report on Schoolhouse Commercializing Trends: 2009-2010. Commercialism in Education Research Unit, National Education Policy Center, 2010. P. 2–6. Available at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/Schoolhouse-commercialism-2010>

In terms of the revenue schools derive from marketing agreements, there are alternatives. Schools have had success with non-food fundraisers that are easy to implement and profitable, including selling fruit, jewelry, holiday items, toys, walk-a-thons, discount cards, and recycling printer cartridges.<sup>6</sup>

Despite significant improvements to foods served in schools, the marketing of unhealthy foods in schools has not been addressed. If companies cannot sell unhealthy foods in school, they shouldn't market them either.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>6</sup> Johnson J and Wootan M. Sweet Deals: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable. Washington, DC: Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2007. <http://www.cspinet.org/schoolfundraising.pdf>