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H.B. 6898, - AN ACT CONCERNING THE MARKETING
OF UNHEALTHY FOODS IN SCHOOLS
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Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children's Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 23 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut.

I'm here today to urge the members of this committee to support H.B. 6898, An Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in Schools.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is keenly aware of the staggering rates of childhood obesity rates in Connecticut. This issue impacts a child's long-term health and performance in the classroom. It can also have a lifelong psychological effect on a child.

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We strongly believe that the marketing of unhealthy foods in schools undermines parent's efforts to feed children a healthy diet. While children are in school, parents are not there to help guide their children's food choices.

Marketing of unhealthy foods in schools makes a parent's job more difficult if they are trying to promote wellness in their own home or create an environment of health living. Many studies have shown that parents support limits on in-school marketing of unhealthy food.

One of the ways we can help children learn about nutrition is to take time, even if it is just a few minutes each time we see them, to teach them about good nutrition and healthy eating habits. If we get creative we can find all sorts of opportunities to incorporate nutrition education into our schools. The Y knows this works and has incorporated this policy into our best practices. However, it is difficult to impact children in a positive way when they are being influenced in a counterproductive manner.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs understands the need to develop more comprehensive anti-obesity strategies that go beyond simply imposing a ban on advertising but this is a start in the right direction.