



Testimony in support of House Bill 6898

Before the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Committee on Children

Public Hearing—March 3, 2015

Submitted by Kate Klimczak, Center for Science in the Public Interest

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 6898: Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in Schools. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a nonprofit health-advocacy organization that specializes in food and nutrition. CSPI strongly supports eliminating unhealthy food marketing in Connecticut schools. We are pleased that the Joint Committee on Children is addressing this important issue.

While there are a number of contributors to children's poor diets and the high rates of childhood obesity, food marketing is one contributor. According to the National Academies' Institute of Medicine, food marketing influences children's attitudes, food choices, diets, and health.<sup>i</sup> Schools are a key place food, beverage, and restaurant companies market to children. According to the Federal Trade Commission, companies spend \$150 million annually marketing foods and beverages in elementary, middle, and high schools.<sup>ii</sup> The majority of the marketed products are of poor nutritional quality. Common in-school food marketing approaches include direct advertising on school property and facilities, such as scoreboards, posters, or bus ads, incentive programs, sponsorships, scholarships, free samples and coupon giveaways, and fundraising programs.

Because children spend more time in schools than in any other setting outside of their homes, it is essential to create a healthy school environment for our children. Allowing the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages undermines the school food improvements being made by Connecticut schools. Schools in Connecticut and across the country have been working hard to make school meals more wholesome and nutritious, and offer healthier snacks sold outside the school meal program. Yet 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.

With one in three children overweight or obese, it no longer makes sense to promote unhealthy foods and beverages in schools. Unhealthy food marketing in our children's schools undermines parents, nutrition education, school food improvements and our children's health. We strongly support passage of House Bill 6898.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important health issue affecting Connecticut children.

Thank you,

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<sup>i</sup> Institute of Medicine. *Food Marketing to Children: Threat or Opportunity?* Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2006.

<sup>ii</sup> Federal Trade Commission [FTC] (2012). A Review of Food Marketing to Children and Adolescents. Follow Up Report.