Model Letter to Chain Restaurant Executives from Consumer Organizations

Dear ______:

We are writing to request that your company disclose nutrition information on menu boards and menus immediately adjacent to the name and price of each standardized item. Such requirements are in place in several American cities, and we understand that your company is complying, or about to comply, with such requirements in San Francisco and New York. See Attachment 1 – Photograph.

Obesity and diet-related diseases have increased significantly as more and more consumers are eating outside of the home. In a major study of 36,894 individuals from ten European countries, researchers found that this shift in dietary habits is directly correlated to increased energy intake and obesity.\(^1\) Studies by the City of Los Angeles and New York City health departments demonstrate that such disclosures help consumers choose healthier options and improve their health. These studies also indicate that disclosures in places such as posters, brochures, tray liners, packages, and www sites do not have a similar impact.\(^2\) See Attachment 2 – Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue Resolution for complete discussion.

Consumers strongly favor disclosure of nutrition information for standardized restaurant foods. According to the results of an Opinion Research Corporation survey commissioned by the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue, more than 75% of consumers “agree” or “strongly agree” that “[f]ast food restaurants and other chains should list nutritional information, such as calories, fat, sugar or salt content on menus and menu boards.” See Attachment 3 – ORC survey results, March 2008. We believe that requiring nutrition disclosures on menus and menu boards will contribute to the European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and garner considerable goodwill amongst consumers.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Name of consumer organization]


Dear ______:
We are writing to request that your [Ministry/Agency/Department] require chain restaurants to disclose nutrition information on menu boards and menus immediately adjacent to the name and price of each standardized item. Such requirements are in place in several American cities. (See Attachment 1 – Photograph). Studies by the City of Los Angeles and New York City health departments demonstrate that such disclosures help consumers choose healthier meal options, thus improving their health.1

Obesity and diet-related diseases have increased significantly as more and more consumers are eating outside of the home. This trend raises serious concerns because chain restaurant foods tend to be higher in calories and saturated fat, and lower in nutrients than foods prepared at home. In a major study of 36,894 individuals from ten European countries, researchers found that this shift in dietary habits is directly correlated to increased energy intake and obesity.2 (See Attachment 2 – Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue Resolution for complete discussion).

Consumers strongly favor disclosure of nutrition information for standardized restaurant foods. According to the results of an Opinion Research Corporation survey commissioned by the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue, more than 75% of consumers “agree” or “strongly agree” that “[f]ast food restaurants and other chains should list nutritional information, such as calories, fat, sugar or salt content on menus and menu boards.” (See Attachment 3 – ORC survey results, March 2008).

As you know, the European Commission has recently proposed requiring nutrition disclosures on labels of processed foods, but has not addressed the issue of restaurant foods. We believe that requiring nutrition disclosures on menus and menu boards addresses matters not within the scope of the EC proposal and is therefore within the jurisdiction of this [Ministry/Agency/Department].

Now is the time to act. Obesity is linked to rising rates of heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses. Younger generations are facing health problems traditionally seen only in adults. Diet related diseases claim tens of thousands of lives each year, and are a financial drain on our health system.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Name of consumer organization]

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