The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Ave, SW Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The undersigned health professionals, organizations, and scientists are deeply concerned about the many harms resulting from the excessive consumption of sugary drinks, particularly among young people. Soda and other sugary drinks are the only food or beverage that has been directly linked to obesity, a major contributor to coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers and a cause of psychosocial problems. Soda and other sugary drinks also cause dental cavities, the most common childhood disease, and other serious dental problems. Yet, each year, the average American drinks about 40 gallons of sugary drinks, all with little, if any, nutritional benefit. We urge you to direct the Surgeon General to prepare a Report on the health effects of sugary drinks and to issue a Call to Action to spur national efforts to reduce sugary drink consumption.

Excessive consumption of sugary drinks has devastating effects on the health of young people. One study found that each extra soft drink consumed per day was associated with a 60 percent increased risk of overweight in children. Research shows that 46 percent of two- and three-year olds consume sugary drinks each day. Alarmingly, type 2 diabetes, which used to occur primarily in middle-aged and older adults, is now becoming more common among teens, especially those who are low-income and minority. Furthermore, obesity has become a national security issue. Twenty-seven percent of America's youth are ineligible for military service because they are overweight.

Once viewed as an occasional treat, sugary drinks have become a routine, daily beverage for tens of millions of Americans. Soda and other sugary drinks are available for sale almost everywhere. The products are aggressively marketed, especially to young consumers and minorities, in both traditional and digital media, and in event sponsorships. They are promoted as a key to happiness, acceptance, social consciousness, togetherness, and fun. The disproportionate targeting of communities of color helps perpetuate health disparities in the U.S. population.

In its May 2012 report, *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention*, the Institute of Medicine recommended adopting policies and implementing practices to reduce overconsumption of soda and other sugary drinks. The following groups also support efforts to cut back the use of sugary drinks: the American Heart Association, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Governors Association, National Association of Local Boards of Health, American Dental Association, American Association of Pediatric Dentistry, and the American Diabetes Association. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advises consumers to drink water instead of sugary drinks.

A Surgeon General's Report on the health effects of sugary drinks would evaluate the science on this issue, appraise the health damaging effects, present all the facts and alert health professionals, health officials, federal food assistance program personnel, and consumers to the serious threat. The report could address the specific ingredients of sugary drinks: the biology, pharmacology, and physiological effects of sugars; addictive mechanisms associated with sugar use or other ingredients contained in sugary drinks; epidemiological data on consumption of these products and their health-damaging effects including obesity; trends in consumption for all age groups; and the gender, racial, and ethnic disparities in the effects of sugary drink consumption on health.

The report would pave the way for policy measures at all levels of government and for widespread voluntary actions in the private sector to improve health and reduce health care costs. An accompanying Surgeon General's Call to Action to reduce consumption of sugary drinks could establish goals for federal, state, and local governments including federal food assistance programs, as well as for other public and private entities.

Consumption of sodas and sugary drinks has declined somewhat in recent years, but is still dangerously high. Unless intake of those beverages is substantially reduced, the health, economic, and psychosocial costs of obesity will continue to rise, imposing unsustainable burdens on our country. Now is the time to take effective action. Much as the 1964 *Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health* focused national attention on the harms of tobacco use, Americans now need a wake-up call with regard to the impact of sugary drink consumption on the health, economy, and national security of our country.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to receiving your response.

cc: Surgeon General Regina Benjamin

Organizations

Alameda County Public Health Department American Association for Health Education

American Clinical Board of Nutrition

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

American Institute for Cancer Research American Medical Student Association American Society of Bariatric Physicians Association of State & Territorial Health

Officials

Association of State & Territorial Public Health

Nutrition Directors

Berkeley Media Studies Group Boston Public Health Commission

California Association of Nutrition & Activity

Programs

California Center for Public Health Advocacy

California Convergence

California Food Policy Advocates

California Public Health Association-North

Catalyst

Center for Communications, Health & the

Environment

Center for Digital Democracy

Center for Food Safety

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Central California Regional Obesity Prevention

Program

Central Valley Health Policy Institute, Fresno

State

ChangeLab Solutions

Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

ChopChop: The Fun Cooking Magazine for

Families

City of El Paso Texas Department of Public

Health

Coalition of National Health Education

Organizations

Community Catalyst, New England Alliance for

Children's Health

Colorado Springs School District 11

Community Health Councils Consumer Federation of America

Cook Like a Chef!

Cuyahoga County Board of Health

Defeat Diabetes Foundation

Directors of Health Promotion and Education

Earth Day Network **Eat Drink Politics** Eat Drink RI EnergyUp!

Environmental Working Group

Evolvement Food Sleuth, LLC

Health Care Without Harm

Health First WI Healthy Howard, Inc. HealthPartners HealthyPlanet

Howard County Health Department (MD)

Indiana Rural Health Association Institute for a Sustainable Future Leaner Healthier Teen Revolution

LiveWell Colorado Marathon Kids

Maternity Care Coalition

Minnesota Center for Obesity, Metabolism and

Endocrinology

Muskegon Family YMCA

My Spa Water

National Action Against Obesity

National Association of County and City Health

Officials

National Center for Weight and Wellness National Congress of Black Women, Inc.

National Consumers League National Dental Association

National Hispanic Health Foundation National Hispanic Medical Association

National Physician's Alliance National WIC Association

NEA Health Information Network

Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island New York City Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene

New York State Healthy Eating and Physical

Activity Alliance Office Furniture Depot

Ohio Public Health Association Oregon Public Health Institute Partnership for Prevention

Pediatric Department at Boston Medical Center Philadelphia Department of Public Health

Prevention Institute Public Health Institute Rescue Social Change Group

Rhode Island State Nurses Association Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors

Santa Clara County Department of Public Health

Shape Up America!

Southern California Public Health Association

Tennessee Obesity Taskforce

The Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children, a program of the Ann & Robert H.

Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago The Earth and Water Wellness Institute

The Food Trust

The Horizon Foundation of Howard County,

MD

The Praxis Project

Trust for America's Health Twin Cities Medical Society United Way of Merced County

University of California at Berkeley School of

Public Health

University of Texas School of Public Health

Upstream Public Health Voices for America's Children

Y Street

Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity Young People's Healthy Heart Program at

Mercy Hospital

Individuals

Anne Bailowitz, MD, MPH, National

Association of County and City Health Officials

Rear Admiral Susan J. Blumenthal, MD (ret.), Former U.S. Assistant Surgeon General

Andrew A. Bremer, MD, PhD, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Endocrinology, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine

David V. B. Britt, Retired President and CEO, Sesame Workshop

Eldridge Dorsey, DDS, National Dental Association

Fern Gale Estrow, MS, RD, CDN, FGE Food & Nutrition Team

Linda P. Fried, MD, MPH, Senior Vice President, Columbia University Medical Center

J. Michael Gonzalez-Campoy, MD, PhD, FACE, Medical Director and CEO, MNCOME

Judith Hallisey, Culinary/Executive Chef of Menu and Program Development, Cancer Treatment Centers of America

Lou Jones, School Nurse, The Geneva School, Winter Park, FL

Scott Kahan, MD, MPH, Faculty, George Washington University Schools of Medicine and Public Health and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Jean Kilbourne, Senior Scholar, Wellesley Centers for Women

Chris Lindley, Prevention Services Division Director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Robert H. Lustig, MD, Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, UCSF School of Medicine

Dr. Alan F. Meyers, MD, MPH, Attending Physician, Boston Medical Center, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine Susan M. Motika, J.D., Food Policy Coordinator, Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Program, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor, Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University

Lauren Niemes, M.Ed., R.D., L.D., Executive Director, Nutrition Council

Dr. Daniel Parry, MD, Pediatric Resident, Boston Combined Residency Program, Boston Medical Center, Boston Children's Hospital

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