



Obesity Health Alliance Secretariat  
Wells Lawrence House  
126 Back Church Lane  
London  
E1 1FH

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Prime Minister  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

21st September 2022

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing on behalf of leaders of health charities, medical organisations, health professionals and thousands of patients to express our profound concern that measures to promote children's health may be abandoned. We strongly urge you to reconsider.

Health is a key national asset. It enables us to work, to be more productive, to live longer, healthier lives. The causes of obesity and diet-related disease are complex and multifaceted, so the solution is a multifaceted plan. You have the opportunity to implement forward thinking policies, grounded in strong evidence, that have substantial public support and put you in a position to improve the health of the nation, and thus increase economic growth and reduce state spending.

Cutting preventable illness is crucial if the Government is going to tackle the NHS backlog, realise its targets to halve childhood obesity by 2030 and deliver on levelling up, as poor diet is a key driver of regional health inequalities. Population level policies - like the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and incentivising healthier food marketing - are more effective and more equitable than individual behaviour change policies. They are also popular with the public who want it to be easier to make healthier choices: 3 in 5 people are in support of unhealthy food and drink advertising restrictions being implemented in January 2023 as originally intended<sup>i</sup>.

What is good for health is also good for business. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy is an extremely successful policy that reduced the amount of sugar in soft drinks by 30%<sup>ii</sup>, whilst increasing sales in the market (up 5.7% in 2021<sup>iii</sup>). Not only has the successful Soft Drinks Levy removed 48,000 kilos of sugar from the nation's diet<sup>iv</sup>, the over £1 billion raised by it has funded over 2,000 school breakfast clubs and school holiday programmes feeding a million children each year<sup>v</sup>. It has also funded sports and PE equipment for primary schools. To stop collecting the Soft Drink Industry Levy revenues would lead to an increase in costs for families on lower

incomes who vitally need these programmes. It is a smart, effective and longstanding policy that has benefited both businesses and those on lower incomes.

We share your concerns about the cost of living, but the OECD has found that average tax bills were £300 per year higher in countries with high levels of obesity<sup>vi</sup>.

We strongly urge you to reconsider any plans to weaken the public health measures. As representatives of health charities, medical organisations, health professionals and thousands of patients, we think it should be easy for everyone to eat healthily, especially children. But it clearly isn't: in an average class of 30 year-six children, 12 will be living with overweight or obesity<sup>vii</sup>. You can make it easier for them to have a healthy, productive future.

Yours sincerely,

The Obesity Health Alliance

Chris Askew, Chief Executive, **Diabetes UK**

Dr Charmaine Griffiths, Chief Executive, **British Heart Foundation**

Michelle Mitchell, Chief Executive, **Cancer Research UK**

Dr David Strain, Chair of Board of Science, **British Medical Association**

Dr Camilla Kingdon, President, **Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health**

Dr Trudi Seneviratne OBE, Registrar, **Royal College of Psychiatrists**

Professor Kevin Fenton, President, **Faculty of Public Health**

Ben Reynolds, Deputy Chief Executive, **Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming**

Katharine Jenner, Director, **Obesity Health Alliance**

William Roberts, Chief Executive, **Royal Society for Public Health**

Prof Giles Yeo MBE, **Professor of Molecular Neuroendocrinology, University of**

**Cambridge; Honorary President, British Dietetic Association**

Barbara Crowther, Coordinator, **Children's Food Campaign**

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chair, **Action on Salt and Sugar**

James Toop, CEO, **Bite Back 2030**

Pamela Healy OBE, **Chief Executive, British Liver Trust**

June O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, **London Early Years Foundation**

Dr Linda Greenwall, **Dental Wellness Trust**

Kim Roberts, Chief Executive, **HENRY: Healthy Start, Brighter Future**

Rebecca Sunter, Programme Director, **Impact on Urban Health**

Hugo Harper, Director of A Healthy Life Mission, **Nesta**

Rachael Gormley, CEO, **World Cancer Research Fund**

Lorraine Tulloch, Programme Lead, **Obesity Action Scotland**

Dr Rebecca Jones, President, **The British Association for the Study of the Liver**

Alison Morton, Executive Director, **Institute of Health Visiting (iHV)**

Maria Bryant, Professor of Public Health Nutrition, **University of York and Fix our Food**

Ignacio Vazquez, Head of Health, **ShareAction**

Eddie Crouch, Chair, **British Dental Association**

Dr Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, **Health Equalities Group**

Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair, **Academy of Medical Royal Colleges**

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, **The Food Foundation**

Mike McKirdy, President, **Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow**

Dr Edward Morris, President, **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**

Dr Vicky Sibson, Director, **First Steps Nutrition Trust**

Professor Andrew Elder, President, **Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh**

Professor Vinod Menon, President, **British Obesity & Metabolic Surgery Society**

Dr Nicola Heslehurst, Chair of the Board of Trustees, **Association for the Study of Obesity**  
 Michael Baber, Director, **Health Action Campaign**  
 Professor John Wass, **Professor of Endocrinology, Oxford University**  
 Rebecca Cooper, CEO, **Children’s Liver Disease Foundation**  
 Dr Adrian Brown, Chair, **British Dietetic Association Obesity Specialist Group**  
 Sarah Le Brocq, Director **All About Obesity & Obesity Advocate**  
 Kathy Lewis, Acting Chair, **The Caroline Walker Trust**  
 Professor Shona Hilton, Deputy Director, **MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow**  
 Dr Fiona Donald, President, **The Royal College of Anaesthetists**  
 Martin Tod, Chief Executive, **Men’s Health Forum**  
 Professor Jim McManus, President, **Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH)**  
 Lynda Phillips, CEO, **British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine (BASEM)**  
 Mr Matthew Garrett, Dean, **Faculty of Dental Surgery, Royal College of Surgeons of England**  
 Professor Simon Capewell, **University of Liverpool**,  
 Professor Rachel Batterham OBE PhD FRCP, special adviser on obesity, **Royal College of Physicians**  
 Dr Marissa Smith, Research Assistant, **MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit (SPHSU), University of Glasgow**  
 Rob Percival, Head of Food and Health Policy, **Soil Association**  
 Professor Amandine Garde, **Law & NCD Research Unit, University of Liverpool**  
 Professor Sir Stephen O’Rahilly, Director, **Medical Research Council, Metabolic Diseases Unit, University of Cambridge**  
 Prof Jack Winkler, **Professor of Nutrition Policy, London Metropolitan University (Retired)**  
 Feng He, **Professor of Global Health Research, Queen Mary University of London**  
 Sarah Turner, Chair, **The Breastfeeding Network**  
 Professor Laurence Moore, Director, **MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit**  
 Neville Rigby, convener, **International Obesity Forum**  
 David McColgan, Chair, **NCD Alliance Scotland**  
 Stephanie Slater, Founder/ Chief Executive, **School Food Matters**  
 Professor Sir Nicholas Wald, **University College London**  
 Tam Fry FRSA, **Patron of Child Growth Foundation and Chair of National Obesity Forum**  
 Carina Millstone, **Executive Director, Feedback**  
 Patricia Marquis, Director, **Royal College of Nursing**  
 Professor Alexandra Johnstone, **Association for the Study of Obesity Scottish Network**  
 Sheila Duffy, **ASH Scotland**  
 Professor Sadaf Farooqi, **Professor of Metabolism and Medicine, University of Cambridge and Scientific Advisor, Obesity Empowerment Network**  
 Jill Muirie, Chair, **Glasgow Food Policy Partnership**  
 Phil Pyatt, CEO, **Blood Pressure UK**

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<sup>i</sup> Not delaying the implementation of a 9pm watershed on junk food advertising, as well as a ban on paid-for online junk food advertising, was supported by a majority of those who are most deprived (56%) and an even greater proportion of those who are least deprived (63%). *These are unpublished findings from the Cancer Research UK’s Public Polling( July 2022) online survey weighted to be nationally representative of the UK (N=2119). Data collected by YouGov Plc.*

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n254>

<sup>iii</sup> [NielsenIQ 52 w/e 7 September 2019]

<sup>iv</sup> Sugar Reduction: progress 2015-2019, published by PHE, October 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-report-on-progress-between-2015-and-2019>

<sup>v</sup> Sugar Reduction: progress 2015-2019, published by PHE, October 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-report-on-progress-between-2015-and-2019>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/6cc2aacc-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/6cc2aacc-en>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/news/2021/significant-increase-in-obesity-rates-among-primary-aged-children-latest-statistics-show>