



Federal Trade Commission Protecting America's Consumers

September 23, 2008

FTC Testifies on Report Regarding Food Marketing to Children and Adolescents

The Federal Trade Commission today testified before two subcommittees of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee about the results of an FTC study released in July on food marketing to children and adolescents.

Before the Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government and the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Commissioner Jon Leibowitz testified that the report, *Marketing Food to Children and Adolescents: A Review of Industry Expenditures, Activities, and Self-Regulation*, found 44 major food and beverage marketers spent \$1.6 billion to promote their products to children under 12 and adolescents ages 12 to 17 in the United States in 2006.

To learn more about the report, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2008/07/foodmktng.shtm>.

"This Report presents a great deal of information not previously collected and not otherwise available to the research community," the commission testified. "Significantly, the study analyzes data from 2006 – a year just before, or very early in the inception of, industry self-regulatory activities."

"The Commission believes that this Report will provide an important benchmark for measuring the future progress of self-regulatory initiatives. In addition to describing the state of food marketing to children and adolescents in 2006 and analyzing industry initiatives to date, the Report also sets forth a number of recommendations," the testimony continued. "After allowing a reasonable time for response to these recommendations, the Commission will issue a follow-up Report assessing the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented and identifying what, if any, additional measures may be warranted."

According to the testimony, "The Commission recommends that all food and beverage companies adopt and adhere to meaningful nutrition-based standards for marketing their products to children under 12. A useful first step would be to join the CBBB [Council of Better Business Bureaus] Initiative. In other words, all companies should take measures to limit their food and beverage promotions directed to children to those for healthier products.

"Second, given the integrated nature of most marketing campaigns, the Commission also recommends that these nutrition-based standards be extended beyond television, radio, print, and Internet advertising, to cover the full spectrum of marketing activities to children, including product packaging, advertising displays at the retail site, premium distribution, celebrity endorsements, and other promotional activities.

"Third, the Commission also recommends that all companies stop in-school promotion of foods and beverages that do not meet meaningful nutrition-based standards. In addition, all companies that sell 'competitive' food or beverage products in schools (outside of the school meal program) should join the Alliance for a Healthier Generation or otherwise adopt and adhere to meaningful nutrition-based standards for foods and beverages sold in schools, such as those recommended by the Institute of Medicine.

"Fourth, the Report contains many other specific recommendations for the food industry, which address the nutritional profile of product offerings, nutrition labeling, healthy messages, and marketing in schools.

"Finally, in light of the character licensing and extensive cross promotion of foods with films and children's television programs, the Report also recommends actions by media and entertainment companies. Included among these is a recommendation that media and entertainment companies should consider instituting their own self-regulatory initiative and working with the CBBB in this endeavor."

The Commission vote to approve the testimony was 4-0.

Copies of the report are available at the FTC's Web site, www.ftc.gov, and from the FTC's Consumer Response Center, Room 130, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20580.

The Federal Trade Commission works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices and to provide information to help spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint in English or Spanish, visit the FTC's online [Complaint Assistant](#) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). The FTC enters complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to more than 1,500 civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad. The FTC's Web site provides free information on a variety of consumer topics.

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Related Items:

Prepared Statement of the Federal Trade Commission On Marketing Food To Children and Adolescents: A Review of Industry Expenditures, Activities, and Self-Regulation, Presented by Commissioner Jon Leibowitz Before the Subcommittee On Financial Services and General Government, and the Subcommittee On Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and

Related Agencies, of the Committee On Appropriations, United States Senate (September 23, 2008)

- [Text of the Commission Testimony](#)
- [Oral Statement of Commissioner Leibowitz's](#)

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