

Childhood Obesity Prevention



In commemoration of World Children's Day (November 20th), we the below signatory organisations of this letter, firstly congratulate the Government of Barbados on its clear public articulation of its commitment to battling Childhood Obesity and Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Our children are being bombarded by unhealthy food environments which include both the sale and marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks. This is particularly inappropriate in the school setting, where children should be exposed to positive training and examples across all aspects of life, not just academics.

We now urge the Government to take brave and urgent action as proposed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and to remove sugary drinks from schools. We are calling for a ban/restriction of the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages in and around all schools across Barbados.

We find particularly alarming the 2010 statistics that show that Barbados loses Bds\$207 million dollars annually in direct and indirect costs associated with Non Communicable Diseases. This is data that small island states like Barbados cannot afford to ignore.



Another statistic that should not be ignored is that 92% of Barbadians already support the evidence-based policies that WHO is proposing including the restriction of unhealthy food and drinks in schools (72%). These figures are from a 2018 CADRES poll.

Barbados needs to protect our children; our future! Our children cannot exercise away unhealthy eating and drinking habits! Also, education on its own will not be enough to protect children from million-dollar strategic

marketing campaigns of companies that manufacture and sell unhealthy drinks loaded with added sugars and/or sweeteners.

Local Civil Society Organisations with the support of PAHO and the National NCD Commission have been doing our part to ensure that Barbadians understand the dangers of the overconsumption of sugar sweetened beverages and other unhealthy dietary practices. The conversation has been brought forward to the front burner of the national discourse and our six brave model schools have banned sweetened carbonated drinks (or sodas) from their schools and will soon start to gradually phase out other SSBs from their schools.

Trinidad has banned SSBs in schools (2017)
Jamaica has banned SSBs in schools (2018)
Belize has banned SSBs in schools (2019)
Bahamas has banned SSBs in schools (2019)

Come on Barbados LET'S REMOVE SUGARY DRINKS FROM SCHOOLS

It must be noted that other schools have also been taking up the challenge to encourage healthier approaches within their schools. Canteen concessionaires have been calling on the canteens in our model schools to get guidance as to what drinks they should purchase for the students. However, without national policy, this process will be very difficult to sustain, placing undue burden on school administrators.

We need the Government of Barbados to join the global and regional movement and to urgently implement strong policy that will remove unhealthy drinks from our schools.

This is the Time to take Action!

Signed by the BARBADOS CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION COALITION:

- Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP)
- Barbados Christian Council (BCC)
- Barbados Diabetes Association*
- Barbados Muslim Association (BMA)
- Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Foundation (BCNF)
- Cancer Society of Barbados*
- Cancer Support Services (CSS)
- Dance 4 Life
- Diabetes Foundation of Barbados*
- George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (GACDRC)
- Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC)
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB)
- United Youth Leaders of Barbados (UYLB)

