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For Immediate Release

Restriction on the Sale of Sweetened Beverages in Six Schools Come September

Six model schools in Barbados are taking the lead on action against the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages (including artificial sweeteners) in schools come September when the new term begins.

They are Alexandra, Christ Church Foundation, Reynold Weeks Primary, St. Michael School, Queens College, and The Rock Christian. The principals and staff of the schools will be working with the Childhood Obesity Prevention Programme of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB) on the restriction of the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages in these school environments.

Principals of the schools are both heartened and enthusiastic about the project as they highlight the need to change the school environments to healthier surroundings where the students are thriving not only academically, but nutritionally, physically, behaviour-wise and emotionally. These comments were noted at the Introduction of the Model Schools Programme session hosted by HSFB at the Cave Hill School of Business on Thursday July 18th.

HSFB along with other members of the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition will be playing a supportive role in the project, providing a team of skilled professionals, such as nutritionists, health and wellness advocates, dentists, along with parents and teachers.

The six schools are forerunners in advocating for national policy on the restriction of the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages in school environments. They will also be showing that schools can be healthy learning environments for students without compromising the health of our children.

Each school will be equipped with a team of professionals led by a coordinator to assist in guiding the school towards healthier choices in food and beverages. This programme will also include the promotion of health clubs, sensitization meetings with the parents and teachers, ongoing training for canteen operators and vendors and the development of school gardens.

The issue of Childhood Obesity has become a global concern and the World Health Organisation has urged countries to implement specific prevention policies. At the national level, research shows that 33 % of children in Barbados are overweight or obese and recently, Barbados officials have been making the case on the international front, that the school is best placed to stand in the breach as an early staging -ground for narratives on health promotion.

In March of this year, the Prime Minister, the Honourable Mia Mottley, in her budgetary and financial statement stated, "We will also start speaking with fast food establishments and with Pine Hill Dairy to ensure that in the manufacturing of their juices or in the preparation of the foods that they will adhere to using healthier ingredients and reduce sugar content, to help in this battle against obesity (especially among children) and diabetes."

-THE END-