



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Barbadians Want a Healthy School Nutrition Policy

Almost all of Barbados (92%) support having a National Policy to ensure a healthy school environment. Additionally, 95% of Barbadians believe it is very important or somewhat important that the government play an important role in reducing obesity. These numbers are from the Caribbean Development Research Services Inc. (CADRES) Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Public Opinion Poll, which was commissioned by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. It's no surprise, as 1 in every 3 adults and children is overweight or obese, increasing their risk of obesity and developing a non-communicable disease (NCD) like cardiovascular disease and diabetes. NCDs cause 8 out of 10 deaths in Barbados and it is estimated that the country spends \$BBD 64 million per year on cardiovascular diseases and diabetes alone. It is against this background that the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, under its Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme, today launched another phase of its campaign entitled "Right to Healthy Foods".

The campaign is designed to increase public knowledge about the health harms of excess consumption of sugary drinks, which can lead to obesity and diabetes that increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. It also intends to encourage policy makers to implement a comprehensive Healthy Nutrition in Schools Policy, including the removal of sugary drinks from schools with the support of parents and guardians.

HSFB President, Mr. Kevin Farmer, said "The time has come when our children's health needs must be a national priority, therefore decisive action is required to ensure they live healthier lives. One of the keys to protecting them from childhood obesity and bringing a reduction in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) is by providing healthy environments in our schools, one free from sugary beverages and unhealthy food. Our children have a right to good health, and we must create an environment where healthy living is possible. Just as we seek to create an environment where our children have financial and career possibilities, we must ensure good health is prioritized as good health makes everything else possible.

Countries, including Barbados, that ratify The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are committed to ensuring and protecting children's rights and agree to be accountable to the international community. One of these rights is the right to adequate health care, including a balanced diet.

Attorney-at-Law, Policy Advisor at HCC, and Law Lecturer at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill, Nicole Foster, said "Children have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Although parents and guardians have the primary responsibility of ensuring this for their

children, the government has a key role to play through policy implementation. One measure the government can effect to help reduce the NCD burden from issues like obesity, heart disease, and stroke, is to remove sugary drinks from schools through a healthy nutrition in schools policy. This will enable a healthier school environment- one where our children can learn and grow optimally.”

The primary campaign ad for “Right to Healthy Foods” shows a Barbadian father and his children stopping at a local mini mart to purchase a refreshment after a school football match. The father, as a responsible parent, considers his options and decides to buy water instead of a sugary drink. His children follow his example, which they can also practice in school.

The “Right to Healthy Foods” campaign will run on TV, radio, in newspapers, on social media and outdoor advertising. Barbadians are encouraged to share messages about the campaign on social media using the hashtags: #RightToHealthyFoods, #PolicyIntoAction, #ProtectOurChildren, #WeDeserveBetter, #PeopleBeforeProfits. They can retweet posts or comment on posts from the Instagram or Facebook pages of @hsfbarbados and @healthycaribbean.

This campaign was inspired by the [Skinny Kids: Children and Sugary Drinks](#) campaign, developed by New York City Department of Health.

The campaign is being implemented in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), Caribbean Institute For Health Research (CAIHR) and other partners.

Further information and stills from the campaign are available upon request.

About the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. is a non-profit organisation registered under the Companies Act 1982 of Barbados registration number 269 and under the Charities Act 1979-2 registration number 82. The Foundation was founded in 1985 as the Heart Foundation of Barbados and in 2006 embraced stroke to become the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados. It’s Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme supports obesity prevention through mass media campaigns for increased awareness of the harms of sugary drinks and promotion of policy change.

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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