

**American Academy of Pediatrics · American Medical Association ·
American College of Preventive Medicine · Center on Alcohol Marketing
and Youth · Center for Science in the Public Interest · Community Anti-Drug
Coalitions of America · Mothers Against Drunk Driving · National
Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners · Southern Baptist Ethics and
Religious Liberty Commission · Security on Campus**

April 15, 2004

Mr. Charles G. Curie, M.A., A.C.S.W.
Administrator
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Parklawn Building
Room 12-105
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Mr. Curie:

As representatives of the public health, substance abuse prevention, consumer, and faith communities, we would like to thank you and the other members of the Interagency Committee for taking up the charge given to Secretary Thompson by the Congress in the Fiscal Year 2004 Appropriations report, to prepare a plan for combating underage drinking. The report language also calls for immediate steps to implement recommendations for improved federal coordination and leadership on underage drinking prevention.

We would respectfully underscore and echo this call for immediate action. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRC/IOM) 2003 report, "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility" does a thorough job of stating the problem and identifying solutions in key areas. According to the science-based report, "the problem of underage drinking in the United States is endemic and, in the committee's judgment, is not likely to improve in the absence of a significant new intervention."

Obviously, assessing and implementing the NRC/IOM's recommendations will take time, planning and resources. However, we would note that in the seven months that have already passed since the NRC/IOM delivered its recommendations to Congress and the Administration, underage drinking has cost our nation billions of dollars, and thousands of our youth have started to drink, putting their future health and safety at risk.

While we understand that the Interagency Committee has just convened its initial meeting, we would hope that the committee is poised to move quickly. To that end, we would point the Interagency Committee to several key recommendations of the NRC/IOM, which reflect our community's jointly identified priorities:

- National Media Campaign Aimed at Adults
Right now the only messages on underage drinking are coming primarily from the alcohol industry. The public, both youth and adults, needs to understand the health and social consequences of underage drinking. In addition, adults are the sole producers and providers of alcohol to children and therefore an effective media campaign should initially be directed to an adult audience.
- Better Federal Coordination and Leadership
As is evidenced by the forming of a federal inter-agency committee, there are so many levels of government and institutions addressing this major public health threat. The public needs roles clearly articulated and solutions disseminated in a cohesive manner so as to maximize the important work and progress being made at the community and state level.
- Increased Resources for States and Communities
Underage drinking issues have not received the necessary, proportional funds to address action at the federal, state and local levels. Reducing the negative societal and medical effects from underage drinking requires this resource commitment.

We look forward to the work of the Interagency Committee and the promise it holds to elevate underage drinking prevention as a public health priority, reduce underage drinking and its harms, and promote the health and well-being of our children.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Medical Association
American College of Preventive Medicine
Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Mothers Against Drunk Driving
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
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cc: Ting-Kai Li, M.D., Director, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
 J. Robert Flores, Administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
 Deborah Price, Deputy Under Secretary, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools
 Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D., Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
 VADM Richard H. Carmona, M.D., Surgeon General

Suzanne Binder, M.D., Director, Injury Center, Center of Disease Control and
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