

**SIGN-ON LETTER
FROM PREVENTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS
TO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE**

**Subject: Please Support Monitoring of Alcohol Advertising
in the FTC Re-Authorization Act of 2008 (S. 2831)**

Dear Senator _____:

As organizations seeking to reduce the major public health and safety problems related to underage drinking, we would like to express our strong support for language in Section 13 of the "Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Reauthorization Act of 2008" (S. 2831), which establishes a bi-annual FTC report on alcohol advertising and marketing practices.

We commend Senators Dorgan and Inouye for their work on this important legislation, and we strongly support Section 13 of the bill. That provision establishes much-needed bi-annual FTC tracking and reporting of alcohol advertising practices, much the same as the FTC has long done on tobacco advertising and marketing. Such reporting will systematize availability of important public health data regarding the nation's third leading preventable cause of early mortality. It will assist in the development of sound public policy on alcohol advertising issues and improve the effectiveness of industry self-regulation. We strongly support this provision and urge that it be retained, as written, in the final legislation.

Like tobacco, alcohol consumption imposes enormous economic costs on society – some \$185 billion per year according to the latest government estimates. Underage drinking is a critical public health and safety issue for young people and the nation, causing an estimated 5,000 deaths per year among youth under age 21.

Alcohol marketers spend close to \$6 billion per year to advertise and promote their products through a wide variety of measured and unmeasured media, including event sponsorships, internet sites, giveaways, mobile phones, product placements and other non-traditional forms of marketing.

While alcohol advertising is not the only factor in underage drinking, numerous long-term federally-funded research studies have found that it is a significant contributing factor. It undermines efforts by parents, teachers, law enforcement, clinicians, clergy and others in the community to discourage underage drinking. In a 1999 report on alcoholic-beverage industry self-regulation, the FTC concluded that, "While many factors may influence an underage person's drinking decisions, including among other things parents, peers and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising also plays a role."

However, unlike for tobacco, there is no established mechanism to regularly or systematically monitor expenditures on alcohol advertising and promotion. The need for such monitoring was underscored by the United States Surgeon General's office in a 2007 report, "The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage

Drinking.” That report recommends that the federal government “conduct ongoing, independent monitoring of alcohol marketing to youth to ensure compliance with advertising standards.” Congress has mandated that the Department of Health and Human Services monitor and report on rates of youth exposure to messages encouraging and discouraging alcohol use in the mass media. Complementing this with bi-annual FTC tracking and reporting of the full range of alcohol advertising and promotional expenditures is a modest and feasible measure of sound public policy.

In recent years, at the request of Congress, the FTC has published two *ad hoc* reports on voluntary advertising self-regulation by the alcoholic-beverage industry (in September 1999 and September 2003). In March 2006, the FTC announced it would produce a third such *ad hoc* report, this time including expenditures on unmeasured marketing activities such as sponsorships and giveaways. These reports have demonstrated the usefulness of data the FTC can collect and report, but their *ad hoc* and sporadic nature limits their effectiveness because they cannot provide the regular, systematic tracking and necessary longitudinal trend analysis of industry advertising practices required for the development of sound public policy.

Please ensure that Section 13 of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Reauthorization Act of 2008 (S. 2831) is retained, as written, in the final bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please let us know if we can provide further information or if we can be of any assistance (contact Kim Crump of CSPI at 202-777-8338).

Sincerely,

622 Communities Partnership, Inc (St. Paul, MN)
Alcoholism Council of New York (ACNY)
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Public Health Association
Burke Council on Alcoholism & Chemical Dependency, Inc. (Morganton, NC)
California Coalition on Alcopops and Youth (CA)
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Community Outreach Prevention Education (C.O.P.E., Washington County, MO)
Council on Addictions of New York State, Inc. (CANYS, Cooperstown, NY)
Dads & Daughters
Focus on Community (Racine, WI)
Friends of Recovery of Delaware and Otsego Counties, Inc. (NY)
Governor’s Highway Safety Association (GHSA)
Hannibal Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse (Hannibal, MO)
Happenings 4 Youth (St. Louis, MO)
Harbor Hall, Inc. (Petoskey, MI)

LEAF Council on Alcoholism and Addictions (Otsego County, NY)
Lee's Summit CARES (Lee's Summit, MO)
The Marin Institute
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)
NCADD Long Beach (CA)
NCADD of Michigan
NCADD of Middlesex County, Inc (East Brunswick, NJ)
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Families in Action
National Organization for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)
Oregon Partnership (OR)
Recovery Resources (Cleveland, OH)
Seaway Valley Council for Alcohol/Substance Abuse Prevention, Inc. (Canton, NY)
Southeast Missouri Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (Cape Girardeau, MO)