



HOUSE OF LORDS

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The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
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Dear Matt.

Consultation on High in Fat, Salt or Sugar (HFSS) Advertising

Congratulations on your appointment as the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

The Committee has recently considered the proposed 9pm watershed on TV advertising of products high in fat, sugar or sugar (HFSS) and thought it would help to write to you with our emerging views and questions.

The Committee supports the Government's objective to reduce childhood obesity. We are concerned, however, that the suggested 9pm watershed on TV advertising of HFSS products would be a disproportionate response to this problem. Research from Ofcom in 2010 indicated that HFSS advertising did not significantly affect children's food preferences: between 2005 and 2009 the rate of childhood obesity either remained constant or increased at the same time as a 37% reduction in children's exposure to such advertising. We would be grateful for information about the evidence you have collected so far to suggest that further restrictions on the advertising of HFSS products on broadcast television will significantly reduce childhood obesity rates.

We also understand that many foods which might be categorised as HFSS may form part of a healthy, balanced diet. We would be grateful to know what consideration you have given to the types of food that would fall within the scope of such a ban.

The Committee is concerned that a watershed for TV advertising of HFSS products would have a serious impact on the revenue of the UK's commercial television, including public service broadcasters, at a time when the budgets for original programming are already strained. We would be grateful to know whether as part of your consultation you intend to carry out an impact assessment of such a watershed on the production of original UK content by commercial public service broadcasters.

The Committee believes that action on childhood obesity would be more effectively directed towards food manufacturers and their products which are high in fat, salt or sugar. What consideration have you given to postponing your proposed consultation on an HFSS advertising watershed until you have been able to review the so-called 'sugar tax' on soft drinks?

We look forward to your response.

Kindest regards

Gilbert

Lord Gilbert of Panteg
Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications