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For Women, Politics & Public Policy

Proposed federal guidelines for foods marketed to children would cut thousands of American jobs, increase the cost of food without lowering the childhood obesity rate

For Immediate Release

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Washington, DC— The Bernard Center for Women, Politics & Public Policy is proud to release “A Question of Smart Government & the Interagency Working Group on Food Marketed to Children: The Unintended Consequences of the Proposed Nutrition Principles on Women, Children & At-Risk Communities and Constitutional Considerations.” This analysis argues the government-funded Interagency Working Group’s proposed guidelines for marketing to children would not lower the childhood obesity rate as intended, but would instead, cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and increase the price of food for low-income families.

Childhood obesity is a serious national problem, particularly for children in low-income neighborhoods, where finding healthy, affordable foods can be a difficult task. In 2009, the US Congress established the Interagency Working Group on Food Marketed to Children (IWG) to combat the epidemic. Made up of representatives from the Centers for Diseases Control (CDC), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the IWG was charged with studying and recommending standards on food advertisements and their impact on children’s nutrition. The IWG’s preliminary “voluntary” regulations released this July would so severely restrict food marketing that healthy items such as whole wheat bread, low-fat yogurt, and 2% milk would be too “unhealthy” to advertise. What’s more, the IWG’s guidelines conflict with food assistance standards such as SNAP and WIC, which are set by the very same agencies that propose these guidelines.

According to a survey by IHS Consulting for the Association of National Advertisers, these guidelines, if approved, could cost Americans an estimated 74,000 jobs in retailing, marketing and manufacturing of foods. The new Bernard Center analysis goes a step further in discrediting these guidelines than recent efforts on Capitol Hill, including a [letter](#) sent by House Energy & Commerce Committee members urging the agencies that crafted the guidelines to withdraw them and start afresh

In their analysis of the IWG guidelines, Bernard Center President & CEO **Michelle D. Bernard** and senior economist **Dr. Anne Rathbone Bradley** argue the proposed recommendations will actually end up hurting those it was charged to protect: obese children.

“ The number of children living with at least one unemployed parent doubled between 2007 and 2010, and African-American children are almost twice as likely to have an unemployed parent as white children. These are the very same demographics of children who experience obesity. Regulations that increase the prices of food by banning advertising make providing healthful food options for ones children more difficult, and the increased prices mean one has less overall disposable income to spend on food.”

Instead of moving forward with the IWG's recommendations, Bernard and Rathbone Bradley suggest promoting policies that encourage parental choice and the elimination of food deserts, increase physical activity and access to healthy and affordable foods, and spur sector innovation. They believe these steps advance smart government and will be more effective in promoting the welfare of children at risk than the sweeping new "voluntary" bans on advertising and marketing suggested by the IWG.

The full paper is available at www.bernardcenter.org.

To schedule an interview with Michelle D. Bernard or Dr. Anne Rathbone Bradley, please contact Christina Jamison-Mozaffari, 301-807-5868, cjamison@bernardcenter.org or Joy T. Fowlin, jfowlin@bernardcenter.org.

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- (1) Promote, advance, and support individual rights, free markets, comprehensive education reform and parental choice, self-reliance and smart government as the keys to achieving the American dream;*
- (2) Improve the socioeconomic status of women, the poor, and ethnic and religious minorities; and*
- (3) Expand the effective participation of women, the poor, and ethnic and religious minorities in the political and public policy arenas.*

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