

April 27, 2010

Ms. Melody Barnes
Director, Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Barnes:

The undersigned organizations would like to meet with your office to discuss the need to modernize Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations that implement the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990. Such regulations are also generally applied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) which regulates meat and poultry labels.

We know that even in these economically troubled times we must keep working on long-term health promotion efforts, focusing especially on matters such as improving food labeling that do not require increased funding, yet produce great returns in terms of health cost savings.

As FDA Commissioner Hamburg has recognized, food labeling is a key component of a comprehensive public health promotion strategy to combat both childhood and adult obesity and diet-related diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

We are very pleased that the FDA has recently taken high profile enforcement actions against 17 manufacturers to stop false or misleading claims on food packages. While such actions are commendable, it is unclear what effect they will have on other food companies.

Further, these enforcement actions alone will not ensure that similar problems do not resurface under later Administrations.

In addition to taking enforcement actions, the FDA needs to engage in rulemaking to: (1) mandate the use of front-of-package nutrition labeling requirements; (2) set a daily value (DV) for added sugars and require that the DV appear on the Nutrition Facts panel; (3) require the disclosure of the amount of caffeine in a customary serving of a product; (4) establish a framework for permitting so-called "structure/function claims"; and (5) revise the format requirements for ingredient declarations so that consumers can easily read them. We note that The First Lady recently focused on the importance of making ingredient statements more prominent and easier to understand as part of her efforts to help children improve their diets.

We look forward to meeting with your office to discuss how these matters can be best addressed by the FDA and USDA.

Sincerely,

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American Medical Association

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Center for Science in the Public Interest

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American Heart Association

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