

Federal Trade Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
Room H-113 (Annex W)  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Interagency Working Group on Food Marketed to Children: FTC Project No. P094513

To Whom It May Concern:

Burrell is a minority-owned advertising agency serving food brands and other clients. We are deeply troubled to learn of the proposed IWG ban on advertising. It is our understanding that the proposal calls for a prohibition on advertising of nearly all foods to anyone under the age of 18. This is disconcerting when one considers the absolute dearth of scientific-based evidence linking food advertising with obesity.

There also appears to be no regard for the fact that numerous foods the government otherwise considers to be “healthy” would be subject to the ban. Burrell does significant work on healthy foods subject to the ban and is concerned about the seemingly arbitrary attack on the businesses we support.

We agree that childhood obesity is a problem. And, we also believe that this IWG proposal will do nothing to address it. There is no evidence that the type of advertising the IWG proposes to ban is actually causing kids to become obese. In fact, the proposal would ban advertising of foods that have been shown to combat childhood obesity, such as ready-to-eat cereals.

It is a known fact that frequent cereal eaters are far less likely to be overweight than those who do not consume cereal. And, cereal eaters also have better overall nutrient intake. Both of these points are equally true for sweetened and unsweetened cereals. **Because cereal is a low-cost, low-calorie, nutrient-dense food, it is especially important in providing key nutrients to economically disadvantaged communities, include the African American community.** In addition to consumption of the important nutrients in the cereal itself, 54% of all milk consumed by African American kids 6-12 is consumed with cereal.

We interpret the IWG’s definition of “marketing to children” as overly aggressive, to the point of being illogical. How can it be harmful to tell families about a healthy, affordable breakfast? These facts demonstrate that there is no sound basis for this proposal, and it would be bad public policy to adopt it. We believe this sets a dangerous precedent of banning advertising that the government arbitrarily decides it dislikes.

In the name of public health and freedom of speech, we strongly oppose this proposed advertising ban.

Regards,

Fay Ferguson  
Co-CEO  
Burrell