United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 20, 2023

Dr. Robert M. Califf
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

James Jones
Deputy Commissioner
Human Foods Program
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

Dear Commissioner Califf and Deputy Commissioner Jones:

I urge you to grant the Citizen Petition filed by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) on April 25, 2023 (FDA-2023-P-1639), which requests that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issue guidance to industry for voluntary targets to lower added sugars across the U.S. food supply. The petition is in line with the White House's commitment to reducing added sugars in its National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, including through "potential voluntary [added sugar] targets," [1] and would advance the Administration's goal of reducing diet-related chronic illnesses.

The U.S. food supply is dominated by products with excessive amounts of sodium and added sugars,[2,3,4] making it difficult for Americans to make healthy choices. The 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend limiting added sugars and sodium to achieve a healthy dietary pattern and reduce the risk of diet-related chronic diseases. The FDA has already taken important steps to reduce sodium in the food supply through its short-term 2.5-year voluntary sodium reduction targets for industry, which, if achieved, would bring down sodium in the food supply by 10 percent.

However, the FDA has not taken similar measures with added sugars. Excessive intake of foods or beverages high in added sugars is linked to Type 2 diabetes[5,6,7] and cardiovascular disease (CVD),[8,9,10] in part by increasing the risk of weight gain,[11] and can contribute to dental decay.[12] On average, adults in the U.S. consume 42 percent more added sugars (17 teaspoons) than is recommended each day.[13] These consumption patterns pose a serious threat to health in the U.S., as an estimated 10–11 percent of the population is affected by Type 2 diabetes,[14] 49 percent of adults have CVD,[15] 42 percent of adults have obesity,[16] and 20–26 percent of adults have

untreated dental caries.[17]

The National Salt and Sugar Reduction Initiative (NSSRI), developed by NYC DOHMH, provides a relevant framework for developing targets to achieve gradual and meaningful sugar reduction in select categories of packaged foods and beverages.

The petition requests the following:

1. The FDA should issue guidance for the food and beverage industry that provides short-term (2.5-year), mid-term (5-year), and long-term (10-year) targets for added sugars content in commercially processed foods and drinks from categories that contribute the most to overall added sugars in the American diet. The long-term goal of the targets should be to bring Americans' consumption of added sugars to less than 10 percent of calories, and the FDA should monitor industry's progress toward achieving the targets.
2. The FDA should create a public online database of all of the top-selling products included in the targeted food categories as well as each product's nutrition information (including added sugars content) and ingredient list.
3. The FDA should provide public progress reports indicating how much progress companies have achieved toward the short-, medium-, and long-term targets.
4. The FDA should expand its guidance to include prepared foods sold at restaurants and elsewhere, once menu labeling regulations are updated to require restaurants to disclose added sugars in menu items upon request.

Added sugars reduction targets are a critical opportunity for the FDA to take action to help Americans reduce their average added sugars intake and to guide the food industry towards gradual, feasible added sugars reductions in foods and beverages over time.

I urge the FDA to grant this petition and take an important step towards realizing the Administration's commitment to reducing added sugars and addressing the crisis of diet-related diseases.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

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