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Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

October 19, 2017

John J. Lynch, Jr.  
President, Chief Executive Officer and Director  
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
125 High Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02110

Re: Channel One News

Dear Mr. Lynch:

We are writing to urge Houghton Mifflin Harcourt to update the Channel One Network Advertising Policies and Guidelines (posted [here](#) online as of August 2014) to prohibit the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages.

In July 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture implemented its final rule on local school wellness policies (81 Fed. Reg. 50151-170). This rule requires schools districts to adopt policies that prohibit the marketing of unhealthy food and beverage products that do not meet the USDA's Smart Snack standards during the school day.

The USDA's Smart Snack standards are considerably stronger than Channel One's advertising guidelines and policies. For example, Channel One's Policies and Guidelines permit ads for sports drinks (and we understand that such ads have appeared on Channel One), while the USDA rules prohibit the advertising of all sports drinks to elementary and middle school students, and only allow no-calorie (up to 20 fl oz) and lower-calorie sports drinks (no more than 60 calories per 12 fl oz) to be advertised to high school students. In addition, Channel One's Policies and Guidelines are vague about what the Network will not advertise (e.g. "All full fat salty snacks") while the USDA provides clear nutrition-based guidelines for saturated fat and salt.

School districts that show Channel One are therefore at risk of violating their own wellness policies. Unhealthy food marketing in schools sends the message to children that good nutrition is unimportant and contradicts nutrition education. Given the high rates of childhood obesity and children's poor diets, students should receive consistent messages about health throughout the school day.

We also ask that, going forward, you make public a list of all advertisers on Channel One so that school districts ensure they are complying with USDA's policies. Currently, the only way to find out what is being advertised on Channel One is to watch each episode. Given what is at stake for both children's health and school district compliance, we urge you to be significantly more transparent about the advertisers on your in-school network.

We would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Center for Science in the Public Interest

American Heart Association

Faith Boninger, National Education Policy Center

Berkeley Media Studies Group

Boulder County Public Health

Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Defending the Early Years, Professor Emerita, Lesley University

Center for Digital Democracy

Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)

Corporate Accountability International

Jennifer A. Emond, PhD, MS, Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Data Science, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College

InterAmerican Heart Foundation

Tim Kasser, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Knox College, Author, The High Price of Materialism

Diane Levin, Ph.D., Professor of Early Childhood Education, Wheelock College

Media Power Youth

Alex Molnar, National Education Policy Center

Moms Rising

Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

The Praxis Project

Public Citizen

Public Health Advocacy Institute at Northeastern University School of Law

Michele Simon, JD, MPH, author of *Appetite for Profit*

Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior

UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity

Tim Winter, President, Parents Television Council