



protecting communities  
from commercialism

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**RE: Eight Questions on Child Health**

Dear Dr. Carmona:

Congratulations on your nomination to be the next Surgeon General of the United States.

Protecting the health of our nation's children must be a top priority for every Surgeon General. Parents and children across the country need their Surgeon General to be courageous enough to promote children's health, even if it conflicts with the interests of industries with considerable political power.

Before the Senate confirmation process begins, we wish to get a sense of how you would handle some of these child health issues.

**Television & media violence.** A recent study by Jeffrey Johnson of Columbia University found a link between television viewing during adolescence and adulthood, and aggressive acts, including violent crime, committed later in life. In a joint statement, The American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians and the American Psychiatric Association have written that "well over 1000 studies...point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children."

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I. Do you agree that the amount of violent entertainment that children watch is a serious problem?



2. Do you agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics that parents should “avoid television viewing for children under the age of 2 years”?

3. Will you make it a high priority during your tenure to urge parents to reduce the amount of television that children watch?

**Alcohol.** As you know, alcohol is a major cause of death among teenagers, contributing to motor vehicle crashes, other injuries, suicide, date rape, and family, school and other problems. Following intense public pressure, NBC recently backed off its plan to broadcast liquor advertisements.

4. Do you oppose the broadcasting of liquor advertisements on television or cable TV?

**Tobacco.** Each day, about three thousand children become smokers in the United States. About one-third of them will have their lives cut short from tobacco-related illness.

5. Do you support the Justice Department’s current civil lawsuit against the tobacco industry?

6. Do you support increasing the federal tax on cigarettes?

7. What will you do to reduce the amount of tobacco advertising and marketing that targets children and teenagers in the United States?

**Junk food and soda pop.** Children are suffering from skyrocketing levels of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Under the compulsory education laws, children are required to attend school. But increasingly, our nation’s public schools have been converted into marketing showcases for high-calorie junk food and soda pop. For example, Primedia’s Channel One shows a parade of ads for soda pop and junk food to eight million students each school day.

8. Will you encourage our nation’s public schools not to market junk food and soda pop to children, and to get rid of Primedia’s Channel One?

Sincerely,

Enola Aird, Director, The Motherhood Project, Institute for American Values

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