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Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Prime Minister  
House of Commons  
London  
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15th June 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We are deeply concerned by reports that the Government will delay the incoming multi-buy price promotions restrictions in England, designed to limit excessive purchasing of unhealthy food. We urge you to follow the evidence and allow it to come into force in October 2023 as planned<sup>[i]</sup>.

Last week, you made a bold and important commitment to cutting NHS waiting lists by reducing obesity - in 2019/2020, there were over one million NHS admissions in England where excess weight was a factor. As you rightly state, the NHS spends £6.5 billion annually on diet-related ill-health, piling pressure on the NHS, driving down economic productivity and forcing thousands of people out of the workforce<sup>[ii]</sup>.

Just yesterday, Health Minister Neil O'Brien MP stated your government was '*determined to halve childhood obesity by 2030*'<sup>[iii]</sup>. The multi-buy price promotions policy is a key part of the Government's evidence-based childhood obesity strategy, designed to work with existing locations promotions and the delayed advertising restrictions, to cumulatively reduce excess calories in the diet. It is vital if we are to meet your target. It has already been delayed by a year, a move criticised at the time by your Chancellor as '*the wrong thing to do*'<sup>[iv]</sup>.

Multi-buy price promotions do not save people money. The government's own data shows they can increase food and drink purchasing by around 22%<sup>[v]</sup>. They encourage people to impulsively buy more unhealthy food, rather than make savings from food already on their shopping list. This puts extra pressure on families with tight food budgets, not less. Instead, this policy will encourage price promotions on healthier food, to help protect the budgets of poorer families and put healthy dinners back on the table.

Two thirds of adults are living with overweight or obesity<sup>[vi]</sup>. More than one in three children are above a healthy weight by the time they leave primary school, in deprived communities,

childhood obesity rates are over twice as high as in the most affluent areas<sup>[vii]</sup>. Unhealthy food has been made so widely available that it is almost unavoidable. It is heavily promoted and significantly more affordable than healthier options.

Two of the UK's largest retailers, Tesco and Sainsbury's, have committed to drop BOGOFs. This legislation is designed to create a level playing field on healthier business across the sector, shift promotions onto healthier products, and incentivise manufacturers to adopt healthier recipes. Your government's impact assessment for restricting volume promotions for high fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) products states that *"expected direct benefits are equivalent to £2,390m over the 25-year assessment period. Social care benefits would amount to £212m, NHS cost savings of £180m and reduced premature mortality would be expected to deliver an additional £283m of economic output"*.

Unless bold preventive steps are taken, excess weight will continue to drive unacceptable inequalities in health outcomes. As a group of leading health charities, campaign groups and medical Royal Colleges, the Obesity Health Alliance urges you to bring in the price promotions restrictions as planned.

Yours sincerely



Katharine Jenner, Director, Obesity Health Alliance

On behalf of the Steering Group

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[i] BOGOF deals face axe. Telegraph 13.06.2023

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/06/12/bogof-deals-face-axe/>

[ii] Frontier Economics (2022) [Estimating the Full Cost of Obesity](#) [accessed 17th May 2023]

[iii] NHS to double specialist clinics for severely obese children. The Times 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/afabf564-0a0f-11ee-947c-69265173b330?shareToken=75fdc3ecc000356e1c7a70c6e2eafd45>

[iv] Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt interview with Iain Dale on LBC on 19 May 2022

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KB4aXOQ5\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KB4aXOQ5_w)

[v] DHSC - Restricting promotions of products high in fat, sugar and salt by location and by price: government response to public consultation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/restricting-promotions-of-food-and-drink-that-is-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt/outcome/restricting-promotions-of-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-by-location-and-by-price-government-response-to-public-consultation>

[vi] NHS Digital, [Health Survey for England 2021](#) [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023]

[vii] Gov. uk [Obesity Profile: statistical commentary](#) December 2022 [accessed 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023]

[viii] Restricting volume promotions for high fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) products

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1003921/impact-assessment-for-restricting-volume-promotions-for-HFSS-products.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1003921/impact-assessment-for-restricting-volume-promotions-for-HFSS-products.pdf) [accessed 14th June 2023]