

HCC OPEN LETTER

TO HON. ANDREW HOLNESS PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA

REF: THE WISYNCO GROUP LIMITED LAWSUIT AGAINST THE HEART FOUNDATION OF JAMAICA

April 25th 2018

Dear Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness,

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), on the occasion of the "**HCC Caribbean NCD Forum: Supporting National Advocacy in Lead up to the 2018 High Level Meeting on NCDs. Towards 25*25 and the SDGs**", in Kingston, Jamaica, April 23-25, 2018, expresses our strong support for the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ) and the objectives of its campaign to contribute to obesity prevention and control in Jamaica by informing the public about the health harms of the over-consumption of sugar sweetened beverages.

As a collective of some 100+ civil society organisations representing every CARICOM country, the health of the peoples of the Caribbean, is at the centre of everything we do. The recent headline in the Jamaican Gleaner, dated April 25, 2018 entitled "**Water War -Wisynco sues Heart Foundation over Campaign against sugary beverages**" is therefore of serious concern to the HCC.

Evidence-based research from international organisations such as the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has shown that added sugars in processed foods and beverages are linked to obesity and in turn contribute to NCDs such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and some cancers. Premature mortality from these diseases in the Caribbean is the highest in our region. As organisations entrusted with protecting the health of Caribbean citizens - especially that of our children - we say ENOUGH. Our role as civil society organisations is to help inform our respective citizens about the health risks posed by unhealthy food and beverage consumption. We shall continue to do this in the responsible, urgent manner that the scale of the NCD crisis in our region demands. We also recall that our regional leaders have pledged to protect children and adults alike, by improving food environments through several measures, including '*banning advertisement of potentially harmful foods which specifically target children; [and] elevating taxes on foods high in sugar, salt and trans-fats*' (Communiqué issued at the conclusion of The Thirty-Seventh Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, 4-6 July 2016, Georgetown, Guyana).



Besides being the major cause of premature deaths in our region, NCDs represent a real and present threat to the region's sustainable development. We urge all stakeholders to put the health of our Caribbean people first.

The Board of Directors of the HCC

The HCC is a coalition of 100+ CSOs across CARICOM

ABOUT THE HCC

The HCC is a registered not-for-profit organisation formed in 2008, arising from the 2007 Declaration of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The HCC is the only regional NCD alliance of over 100 health and non-health civil society organisations (CSOs). The HCC works closely with regional and international leaders in NCD prevention to leverage the power of civil society by strengthening and supporting its membership in the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with NCDs.

The HCC is in Official Relations with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and a member of the NCD Alliance (NCDA), the World Heart Federation (WFH).