

HCC OPEN LETTER

TO THE HONOURABLE EMMALIN PIERRE

MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF GRENADA

And

TO THE HONOURABLE NIKOLAS STEELE

MINISTER OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
OF GRENADA

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A BAN ON CARBONATED BEVERAGES AND SWEET SNACKS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN GRENADA

EFFECTIVE 1 JANUARY 2020

November 29, 2019

Dear The Honourable Emmalin Pierre and The Honourable Nikolas Steele,

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) wishes to congratulate the Grenada Ministries of education and Health, Social Security and International Business and the Government of Grenada on your recent announcement that carbonated beverages and sweet snacks will be banned from all public and private schools effective January 1, 2020. This action taken by the Government of Grenada supports the HCC [Civil Society Action Plan 2017-2021: Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean](#) and the recent HCC [Civil Society Call to Urgent Action for the Caribbean region to Accelerate Nutrition Policies for the Creation of Healthy Environments for Caribbean Children](#), both of which call on the Governments of CARICOM countries to implement a package of evidence based policy actions aimed at tackling childhood obesity –

including a ban on the sale and marketing of sweet beverages in and around schools. The Grenada ban in schools also realises a commitment made by your Honourable Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell, at the 39th Summit of CARICOM Heads of Government and State in 2018 when Heads endorsed a number of priorities for the 3rd UN High Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) including: “*implementing policies geared to preventing childhood obesity, including **health-promoting school environments** and Front of Package (FOP) labelling*”.

The HCC would also like to recognise the tremendous contributions made by the Grenada National Chronic NCD Commission. The HCC is committed to strengthening and partnering with National NCD Commissions across the region and we have worked closely with the Commission in Grenada. Led by the Chairman, Dr. Damian Greaves, the Commission identified childhood obesity as a priority and has been focused on advocating and supporting the Government of Grenada in prioritizing and fast tracking the implementation of nutrition policies which will tackle obesity among children and adults.

The HCC strongly supports this policy measure which is part of a wider strategy to combat the urgent epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity we are facing in Grenada and the wider Caribbean. We look forward to seeing the details of the policy so it can be shared on HCC’s regional [Childhood Obesity Prevention Scorecard](#) online tracking platform which provides a regional snapshot of policy progress in this critical area of tackling unhealthy weights among the region’s children. This will be useful for other regional governments keen to follow the leadership of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Belize, The Bahamas and now Grenada - in taking population-level policy measures to create healthier school environments.

The ban on carbonated beverages in schools aligns with actions endorsed by the World Health Organisation’s [Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity: Implementation Plan](#) which calls for the elimination of the provision or sale of unhealthy foods, such as sugar-sweetened beverages and energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods, in the school environment. The Caribbean has the highest NCD mortality rate in the Americas and 40% of these deaths occur prematurely before the age of 70 years. Obesity is a major underlying factor which contributes to the development of NCDs, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. One in three Caribbean children are either overweight or obese placing them on trajectory for health complications in childhood and adolescence and increased risk of NCDs in adulthood. In Grenada, among children 5-19 years old, 26.4% are overweight or obese and 10.7% are obese¹.

Implementation of policies that support obesity prevention and reduction efforts are key to making the environments in which our populations live, work, and grow less obesogenic. Such policy measures, when

¹ <https://www.healthycaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HCC-COP-Fact-Sheet-Grenada-July-2019.pdf>

implemented effectively, create strong regulatory environments which support positive dietary behaviours, help drive product reformulation, and encourage manufacturers and retailers to increase the availability of affordable, healthier food and beverage options. Every Caribbean country is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), thereby underscoring the important role of governments to ensure that those most vulnerable in the population - our children - are protected from continuous exposure to harmful environments that promote consumption of products high in salt, sugar, and trans fats.

The HCC applauds the leadership of the Government of Grenada in its actions taken to combat NCDs and welcomes continued bold action in this area through further implementation of the WHO NCD Best Buys.

- The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of the HCC, Technical Advisors and the 100+ HCC Members