

ICCR's Access to Nutrition Roundtable: Corporate Leadership in Addressing Childhood Obesity

As part of our Access to Nutrition initiative, ICCR members have been engaging restaurant, media, retail, and food and beverage companies on strategies to help reduce the epidemic of childhood obesity. In order to deepen this engagement and make more meaningful progress on the issue, on December 13, 2013, ICCR and the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI), a program of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, convened a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders to begin to answer two key questions:

What are the opportunities and obstacles companies face in marketing healthier foods to children and families? and;

What are the multiple factors that shape voluntary corporate commitments on marketing to youth and what does the future of self-regulation look like?

The roundtable was intended to foster a deeper and more nuanced exploration of opportunities highlighted during the recent White House Convening on Food Marketing to Children led by First Lady Michelle Obama.



Trish Zecca, Campbell Soup Company, Mary Sophos, Grocery Manufacturing Association

The general goal for the roundtable was to provide a forum that would encourage and support productive, direct discussion between the key participants (investors, companies and public health researchers, advocates, and officials), in which:

1. Company representatives would be given an opportunity to discuss, describe and explain the context in which corporate decisions about marketing to children are made, describing challenges and opportunities they see in this area of corporate practice;
2. Public health researchers and advocates could share research, insights and ideas about marketing to children;
3. Investors could explain why, how, and when they consider obesity-related risks and opportunities when managing their investments; and



Panelists: Inge Kauer, Access to Nutrition Index, Elaine Kolish, CFBAI, Mary Catherine Toker, General Mills and Paul Boykas, Pepsi

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4. All participants would share ideas about realistic, high-priority increments of change in corporate policy and practice to address obesity.

The participants comprised:

- ICCR members who are representatives of faith-based institutions and socially responsible asset management firms, as well as SRI analysts;
- Representatives of large, publically-traded food or retail companies, trade associations, or corporate self-regulatory initiatives, and;
- Representatives from academic institutions, advocacy organizations, consulting firms, think tanks, and public-private partnerships focused on public health and childhood obesity.

Said ICCR's Ava Alkon, "There is great value in getting everyone to the table to share, to begin thinking differently about the issue and to imagine ways they might begin to address it. Roundtable participants spoke with genuine candor and gained new

insights about how decision-making occurs in other stakeholder groups - in some cases overcoming real misconceptions. This meeting generated optimism that continuing dialogue between industry, investors, and external groups will yield meaningful change soon."

"As investors, we view the obesity epidemic as a genuine business risk for companies in our portfolios that produce, market and sell products deemed unhealthy, and those risks have financial implications," said Gwen Farry of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "As people of faith, we also view this public health crisis as a moral issue and, given the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on low-income communities and communities of color, as an issue of social justice we are compelled to address. We are grateful to all who participated in the roundtable for their willingness to discuss how companies can have a meaningful impact on obesity."

"We were delighted to co-convene and participate in this roundtable, where there



Monifa Bandele, MomsRising

was a thoughtful focus on constructively addressing this important issue, rather than finger-pointing," said Elaine Kolish, Director of CFBAI and VP, Council of Better Business Bureaus. "We all care deeply about the impact of obesity on children and our society, and CFBAI's participants are committed to being a part of the solution. We know there is room for more improvement and dialogues like this help us focus our efforts."



ICCR's Cathy Rowan, Laura Berry and, at podium, Ava Alkon

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