



Policy to Prohibit Advertising
to Children Under 8
will Protect our Future

Dear [Policymaker],

The NFEC is calling for policy to ban all advertising efforts to children under the age of 8 years old. Our goal in this request is to protect our children's well-being and ensure that misleading marketing messages are not shaping their values and financial behaviors into the future.

Children aged 8 and younger lack the cognitive ability to recognize the persuasive intent of advertising to which they're exposed, and are unable to discriminate between commercial and noncommercial content.(1) It's also been shown that, even up until age 11, kids do not fully understand advertising's intent and bias.(2)

Research clearly demonstrates that advertising to children can have harmful effects which may last a lifetime. Child-targeted marketing can harm children's health and self-esteem, perpetuate gender and social stereotypes, encourage materialism, and spark family conflict.(3,4) Marketing exposure can negatively affect kids' financial health as well – childhood materialism has been linked with risk of future overspending and debt.(5,6) Children's brains are not fully developed to sufficiently regulate impulsive behaviors and delay gratification. Therefore, advertising to kids also may be associated with drug and alcohol use in adulthood. (4) In addition, violent media like movies and video games are being marketed to children, with potential to increase violent behavior.(1)

Currently, the advertising industry is only self-regulated in terms of ads targeting children. However, self-regulation has proven to be weak, inconsistently enforced, and ineffective.(1,7) The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Psychological Association, and United Nations all have recommended policies to prohibit advertising to young children.(1,5,6) Enacting such policy can make a powerful difference in children's lives by helping protect them from the negative impact of commercialist and materialistic attitudes and behaviors. In turn, those policies will contribute to the health and well-being of our entire society.



Research Cited

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