

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Scott Gottlieb, MD
Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Re: Docket No. FDA-2012-N-1210; Food Labeling: Revision of the Nutrition and Supplement Facts Labels and Serving Sizes of Foods That Can Reasonably Be Consumed at One Eating Occasion; Dual-Column Labeling; Updating, Modifying, and Establishing Certain Reference Amounts Customarily Consumed; Serving Size for Breath Mints; and Technical Amendments; Proposed Extension of Compliance Dates

Dear Commissioner Gottlieb:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I commend the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for advancing the process that resulted in a revised Nutrition Facts label. This process marked the first comprehensive overhaul of the label since its appearance on packaged foods in 1994. The AMA, however, opposes any delay of the updated Nutrition Facts label regulations and requests that the FDA not alter the compliance dates.

The AMA has committed its resources, expertise and reach to prevent heart disease and type 2 diabetes and to improve outcomes for people suffering from these diseases. The updated Nutrition Facts label is an opportunity to better equip consumers on strategies to improve their diets. This information from the FDA in combination with what physicians provide to their patients in clinical practice will aid in the prevention and management of these expensive and debilitating chronic medical conditions. Any delay in providing consumers with this much needed information will result in a continuing rise in diseases and conditions associated with poor nutritional and dietary choices.

The updated Nutrition Facts labels are easier for consumers to understand and use, and also provide critical information that consumers need to make healthy food choices, including a line for added sugars, more prominent disclosure of calorie content, more accurate serving sizes, updated percent Daily Values (DVs), and new, required disclosures of nutrients of public health concern.

The AMA has policies on obesity prevention, sugar sweetened beverage consumption, and reducing sodium intake that served as guidance for our comments on the proposed changes to the Nutrition Facts label. An underlying principle in these policies is a recommendation to improve consumer education on positive health impacts associated with healthier food and beverage consumption. The scheduled release of the enhanced nutrition label is a very important tool of that strategy.

The public health urgency of keeping to the original compliance dates is underlined by the recent release of national obesity data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), showing unacceptably high and rising prevalence rates. The CDC reported all-time high prevalence—almost 40

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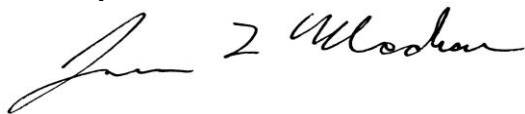
percent of adult Americans have obesity and almost 19 percent of youth have obesity.¹ These new data also underscore the health inequity of the obesity epidemic, with CDC reporting that the “overall prevalence of obesity was higher among non-Hispanic black and Hispanic adults than among non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic Asian adults.”²

By delaying compliance, consumers cannot follow the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans’ advice on added sugars that are now part of the updated Nutrition Facts label’s mandatory disclosures. The current Nutrition Facts label does not disclose the amount of added sugars in foods, yet that information is crucial to help consumers comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans’ recommendation to limit daily added-sugars consumption to less than 10 percent of calories (e.g., 50 grams in a 2,000-calorie diet).³ Even if consumers could recognize all the forms of added sugar listed in the ingredient label—such as fructose, maltose, sucrose, honey, evaporated cane juice, and concentrated fruit juice—they could not possibly estimate the added sugars in a food.

Current consumption levels of added sugars can lead to serious health problems. Strong evidence shows that consuming sugar-sweetened beverages—the largest source of added sugars in Americans’ diets—leads to weight gain.⁴ A systematic review commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that “intake of free sugars or sugar sweetened beverages is a determinant of body weight.”⁵ The 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee found “strong” evidence that added sugars from food and/or beverages are associated “with excess body weight in children and adults” and with the “risk of type 2 diabetes among adults.”⁶ Furthermore, added sugars are associated with an increased risk of dying of cardiovascular disease (CVD), high blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, and triglyceride levels.^{7,8}

In summary, the AMA urges the FDA to adhere to the 2018 compliance schedule to provide consumers with this needed nutritional information that will contribute to improving the health of the nation.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

¹ Hales CM, Carroll MD, Fryar CD, Ogden CL. Prevalence of obesity among adults and youth: United States, 2015–2016. National Center for Health Care Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. October 2017. Data Brief No. 288. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db288.htm>.

² Hales CM, Carroll MD, Fryar CD, Ogden CL. Prevalence of obesity among adults and youth: United States, 2015–2016. National Center for Health Care Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. October 2017. Data Brief No. 288. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db288.htm>.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-2/a-closer-look-at-current-intakes-and-recommended-shifts/>.

⁴ De Ruyter JC, Olthof MR, Seidell JC, et al. A trial of sugar-free or sugar-sweetened beverages and body weight in children. *N Eng J Med*. 2012; 367:1397–406.

⁵ Te Morenga L, Mallard S, Mann J. Dietary sugars and body weight: systematic review an meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials and cohort studies. January 15, 2013. *BMJ*. 345:e7492.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Available at <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/PDFs/04-Integration.pdf>.

⁷ Te Morenga L, Mallard S, Mann J. Dietary sugars and body weight: systematic review an meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials and cohort studies. January 15, 2013. *BMJ*. 345:e7492.

⁸ Yang Q, Zhang Z, Gregg EW, et al. Sugars intake and cardiovascular disease mortality among US adults. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2014; 174:516–24.