

**OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS from the
BARBADOS CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION COALITION**

**RE: Childhood Obesity
Prevention**

In commemoration of Child Month, we the below signatory organisations to this letter, committed to the positive development of Barbados and to the health and well-being of all our people, are pleased to announce the official launch of the **Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition**.

As a Coalition, we **strongly support** the **global battle against childhood obesity** and the World Health Organisation's (WHO) proposed policies for the prevention of obesity and unhealthy weight gain among our young population. Currently WHO statistics indicate that **31% of children in Barbados are overweight or obese and at risk for developing non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancers.**

The evidence is that the growing epidemic of obesity among children is inextricably linked to poor nutrition and eating habits, coupled with increasingly sedentary lifestyles. In particular, **the overconsumption of added sugars has been particularly harmful.** The WHO recommends that **children up to the age of 16 years should consume no more than 25 grams or 6 teaspoons of added sugars daily.** The majority of **popular juices and soft drinks contain over 25 grams of sugar in just one serving.** In Barbados, the results of recent research done conducted in schools showed that 73.3% of school children drank one or more sugary drinks a day.

It must be noted that the results of the 2018 CADRES (Caribbean Development Research Services) poll showed that the majority of Barbadians (82%) are concerned about childhood obesity and support the implementation of policies to create a healthy school environment. Ninety-nine per cent (99%) of Barbadians also felt it was important for Government to play a role in reducing obesity.

Therefore, as a result of research results emerging locally and globally, the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition is calling on the Government of Barbados to urgently and effectively implement strong policy to restrict the sale and marketing of sugar sweetened beverages in and immediately around schools across Barbados.

While the Coalition supports a holistic approach, including public education and the promotion of exercise, in the response to the challenge of childhood obesity, the implementation of policies and legislation is critical to creating a healthy food environment that supports the necessary and desired behaviour change.

Therefore, as a civil society coalition, we call for the implementation of evidence-based and WHO recommended policies that will redound to a significant reduction in childhood obesity in Barbados.

We stand committed to continuing the public education and evidence-based advocacy around this issue to ensure that parents and children are empowered to make better choices.

And we further commit to providing Government with the supportive and enabling environment to implement the necessary legislation and programmes to protect our children by significantly improving their school food environment. **The time is now to Switch it up to Protect our Children!**

Signed by the

BARBADOS CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION COALITION:

- Barbados Cancer Society (BCS)
- Barbados Christian Council (BCC)
- Barbados Diabetes Foundation (BDF)
- Barbados Muslim Association (BMA)
- Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Foundation (BCNF)
- Dance4life
- Diabetes Association of Barbados (DAB)
- George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (CDRC)
- Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC)
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB)
- JG's Fitness

