

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

December 16, 2022

Robert M. Califf, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20993

Dear Commissioner Califf,

We write to urge the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prioritize issuing regulations establishing a mandatory front-of-package nutrition labeling system for foods sold in the United States and to inquire into FDA's timeline for taking such action.

Consumers deserve clear, accurate information about the food they purchase in order to make healthy choices for themselves and their families. A large body of scientific research shows that nutrition information plays an important role in the battle against obesity and diet-related disease, which are responsible for hundreds of thousands of premature deaths in the United States each year, as well as increased health care costs. Over the past several years, dozens of countries have already adopted food labeling policies that provide nutrition information in a format that is quick and easy to understand and help people avoid consuming excess salt, sugar, and saturated fat. Establishing a standard for front-of-package labeling is a significant step FDA can take to bring clarity to consumers and empower them to make healthier choices.

We appreciate that FDA is currently undertaking efforts to redefine the "healthy" nutrient content claim design and implement a voluntary "healthy" symbol that will help consumers identify healthier packaged foods. However, we are concerned these policies will not go far enough in protecting consumers' health. Research shows that similar "endorsement logo" systems are less effective than other front-of-package labeling systems at improving diet quality and could have the unintended effect of leading to a price premium on products bearing the logos, making these healthier foods less accessible. Further, with voluntary endorsement logo policies, consumers have no way of knowing whether foods lack endorsement logos because they are not sufficiently healthy, or because the manufacturer has opted not to apply the label.

We are encouraged that the White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health calls for the development of a front-of-package labeling system for food packages. We urge FDA to prioritize this task and, specifically, to adopt a mandatory front-of-package nutrition labeling system aimed at addressing overconsumption of salt, sugar, and saturated fat from our packaged food supply.

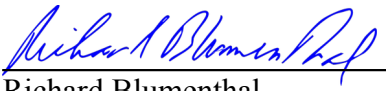
As such, we respectfully request answers to the following questions by January 20, 2023:

1. Please explain what actions, if any, FDA has taken toward creating and implementing a front-of-packaging nutrition labeling system for packaged foods sold in the United States.

- a. If FDA is currently considering a rulemaking on front-of-package labeling, please provide a projected timeline for implementation.
- b. If FDA is not currently considering such rulemaking, please explain the barriers in doing so.

Thank you for upholding your mission to protect the public's health. We look forward to your response.

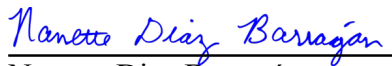
Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



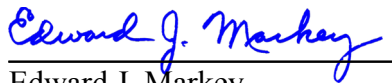
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