



March 30, 2017

Dear Council Member,

As national organizations dedicated to protecting children and youth from dangerous marketing messages for harmful products, we are writing to urge you to sign on as a co-sponsor for New York City Council Resolution 922-2015 calling on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the Governor, and the State Legislature to prohibit advertisements for alcoholic beverages on subways, buses, and other New York City Transit property.

Tens of thousands of New York City students ride subways and busses to and from school every day, where they are exposed to advertising messages that normalize and glorify alcohol use. Students spend time waiting in the subway stations for their trains, rendering young people a captive audience for alcohol advertisers.

As you know, underage drinking is dangerous and can lead to serious long-term negative health and social consequences, including violence, sexual assault, drinking and driving, anxiety and depression,<sup>1</sup> and alcohol-related cancers.<sup>2</sup> According to New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), there are about 7,000 emergency room visits each year in NYC involving underage drinking.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, numerous studies have shown a significant connection between excessive youth drinking behavior and the number of alcohol advertisements to which young people are exposed.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, it is unacceptable that the MTA continues to facilitate the exposure of New York City children and youth to health-harming messages.

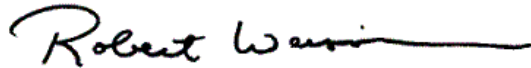
Research published earlier this month in the *Journal of Urban Health* demonstrates that this is not only a public health problem - it is an issue of health equity and social justice. The researchers' survey of subway stations in the Bronx found that advertisements for alcohol (as well as other unhealthy food and beverages) were more likely to be found in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty, lower educational attainment, higher percentages of black and Hispanic residents, and more children. This strongly suggests that alcohol companies are effectively using the New York City transportation system to target low-income residents and people of color.<sup>5</sup>

As a Council Member, you can voice your opposition to this practice and stand up for the health of your most vulnerable citizens. By doing so, you can help New York City to reclaim its place as the national leader in public health policy, and join the list of large cities with policies that restrict or completely remove alcohol advertising from public transportation systems. Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, Sacramento, Seattle, Indianapolis, and Phoenix do not allow alcohol advertisements in their urban transit systems.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, Los Angeles City Councilmembers voted to further protect public health and ban alcohol advertising from all city-owned and managed property, including buses.<sup>7</sup> The MTA removed tobacco advertising from its system in the 1990s for the express purpose of protecting

the health of young people. It should do no less for alcohol, which is a prime factor in the leading causes of death for adolescents.<sup>8</sup>

The New York City Council should advocate for public health over alcohol industry profits. To protect public health and promote health equity, we strongly urge you to co-sponsor Resolution 922-2015. Please direct any response to Kristen Strader at [kstrader@citizen.org](mailto:kstrader@citizen.org) or 202-588-7785.

Sincerely,



Robert Weissman  
President, Public Citizen



Joshua Golin  
Executive Director, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood



Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.  
President, Center for Science in the Public Interest

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, J., Naimi, T., Brewer, R., Jones, S. (2007). Binge Drinking and Associated Health Risk Behaviors Among High School Students. *Pediatrics*, 119.1. Retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/76>

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, D. E., Jarman, D. W., Rehm, J., Greenfield, T. K., Rey, G., Kerr, W. C., et al. (2013). Alcohol-attributable cancer deaths and years of potential life lost in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(4), 641-648.

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Mayor of NYC (2015). UNDERSTANDING NEW YORK CITY'S MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE. Retrieved from [http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2015/thriveNYC\\_white\\_paper.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2015/thriveNYC_white_paper.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, P., Brujin, A., Angus, K., Gordon, R., Hastings, G. (2009). Impact of Alcohol Advertising and Media Exposure on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies". *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 44. Retrieved from <http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/content/44/3/229>; Siegal, M., Ross, C., Albers, A., DeJong, W., King, C., Naimi, T., Jernigan, D. (2015). The relationship between exposure to brand specific alcohol advertising and brand-specific consumption among underage drinkers – United States, 2011-2012. *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse.*; Anderson, P., Brujin, A., Angus, K., Gordon, R., Hastings, G. (2009). Impact of Alcohol Advertising and Media Exposure on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies". *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 44. Retrieved from <http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/content/44/3/229>

<sup>5</sup> Lucan, Sean C., Maroko, Andrew R., Sanon, Omar C., Schechter, Clyde B. (2017). Unhealthy Food-and-Beverage Advertising in Subway Stations: Targeted Marketing, Vulnerable Groups, Dietary Intake, and Poor Health. *The New York Academy of Medicine*. Retrieved from <http://www.readcube.com/articles/10.1007/s11524-016-0127->

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<sup>6</sup> Alcohol Justice (2013). These Bus Ads Don't Stop for Children: Alcohol Advertising on Public Transit. Retrieved from [https://alcoholjustice.org/images/stories/aj\\_transitad\\_report\\_f\\_low.pdf](https://alcoholjustice.org/images/stories/aj_transitad_report_f_low.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Karlamangla, Soumya (2015). Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-alcohol-ad-ban-20150120-story.html>.

<sup>8</sup> CDC (2016). Fact sheet: Underage drinking. Retrieved at <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>