



To the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Health, May 30, 2007

State Senator Susan C. Fargo  
State House. Room 504, Boston, MA 02133  
and  
State Representative Peter J. Koutoujian  
State House Room 130, Boston, MA 02133

Re: House Bill 489, "An Act Relative to the Public Health Impact of Commercialism in Schools."

On behalf of the Massachusetts Parents Teachers Association, an affiliate of National PTA, the largest and oldest child advocacy organization in the nation, I am writing in support of House Bill 489, "An Act Relative to the Public Health Impact of Commercialism in Schools

The Massachusetts PTA supports the goal of protecting children from commercial exploitation by prohibiting advertising and marketing on school grounds or on property that is owned or leased by a public school.

We agree with the recent recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics that pediatricians should work with parents, schools, community groups, and others to ban or severely curtail school-based advertising in all forms. We need a strong bill to set a high standard to protect children from the growing commercialism in our schools and to help us work together to stop all exploitation of children by advertisers.

We speak on behalf of children because they are especially vulnerable to the ubiquitous and unethical advertising and branding that is all around them. As responsible adults, we are concerned about marketing that feeds the growing epidemic of obesity and other physical disorders and mental health problems, especially in children. As responsible adults, our responsibility is to protect children from corporate marketers who aggressively promote damaging values and destructive behaviors to children, such as violence, hedonism, addiction, materialism, and fast food.

Advertising and branding is so pervasive and so manipulative that it has distorted cultural values, threatens children's physical and mental health,

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undermines parent and child relationships, and hinders education and healthy development. This marketing in schools, in all media, and in new and insidious ways via new technologies is explicitly designed to brainwash our children. The presence of logos and advertising in schools conveys an endorsement and creates an attachment to products and manufacturers that exploit children and encourages extravagance and waste.

These corporate advertisers take advantage of school officials and parents in underfunded schools. Underfunding of schools has opened the door to advertisers that work to turn schools into agents of businesses and our children into walking billboards wearing logos and brand names.

Today too many schools cooperate in corporate programs that encourage families to participate in product promotions and in advertising campaigns that lure children to websites for more indoctrination into the culture of fast food, violence and consumerism.

MassPTA believes that HB 489 will protect children and promote the shared responsibility of pediatricians, parents, teachers, and policy makers to help schools achieve their primary mission of promoting and protecting the healthy development of children.

Yours truly,

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on behalf of the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association

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Massachusetts PTA  
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