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# Congress of the United States

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June 25, 2003

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INDEPENDENT

The Honorable Timothy J. Muris  
Chairman  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20950

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Fiscal Year 2003 Appropriations Bill instructs the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to review whether self-regulation by the alcohol industry effectively limits the exposure of youth to alcohol advertisements. In 1999, when FTC last addressed this question, the Commission recommended that the industry strengthen its voluntary codes, which generally opposed advertising to majority-youth audiences. FTC also recommended that the alcohol industry improve enforcement of its advertising practices using a system of independent review.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1999, new data has been reported on the advertising practices of the alcohol industry. The Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY), based at Georgetown University, has found that youth ages 12–20 are more likely to see magazine advertisements for beer and liquor than adults age 21 and over.<sup>2</sup> CAMY has also found numerous instances of alcohol companies advertising on television and radio program with majority youth audiences.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, researchers from UCLA and Northwestern University found that in popular magazines, there are 60% more beer and liquor advertisements for every additional million underage readers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Federal Trade Commission, *Self-Regulation in the Alcohol Industry* (Sept. 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *OverExposed: Youth a Target of Alcohol Advertising in Magazines* (Sept. 2002).

<sup>3</sup>Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Radio Daze: Alcohol Ads Tune in Underage Youth* (Apr. 2003); Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth, *Television: Alcohol's Vast Adland* (Dec. 2002).

<sup>4</sup>C. Garfield, P. Chung, and P. Rathouz, *Alcohol Advertising in Magazines and Adolescent Readership*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2424–9 (May 14, 2003).

There is also growing evidence of the risks of alcohol consumption by teenagers. A new study has found early exposure to alcohol in adolescence is associated with employment problems, substance abuse, and criminal and violent behavior.<sup>5</sup>

In light of this new data, we believe FTC should address the following questions in its new report on youth exposure to alcohol advertising: the different types of advertising media, whether children and teenagers are disproportionately exposed to alcohol advertisements, whether there is evidence of intent by companies to target underage consumers, and whether current self-regulation is sufficient. This assessment should inform your recommendations on what new additional policy responses are needed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman

Liaelle Royal-Allard

Harold L. Berman

Nita Lowey

Shirley Berman

Jim Cooper

Ciro D. Rodriguez

Pete Stark

Rosa L. Swartz

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<sup>5</sup>Phyllis L. Ellickson, Joan S. Tucker, and David J. Klein, *Ten-Year Prospective Study of Public Health Problems Associated with Early Drinking*, *Pediatrics*, 949-955 (May 5, 2003).