Dear Prime Minister,

We are delighted you have decided to take action to address obesity, a health condition millions of adults and children are living with in the UK.

Living with obesity increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, non-alcohol related fatty liver disease and thirteen types of cancer, as well as worsening the outcomes for COVID-19. Treatment costs to the NHS are currently £6.1bn per year, with an estimated cost to the wider economy of £27bn. There is also a huge, often ignored personal cost to individuals; those living with obesity are more likely to live with mental health issues and face stigma, worsening their prospects in all areas of life. This is not a societal cost we need to bear: obesity can be both treated and prevented and families can be healthier as a result. Poor diet, in particular sugar consumption, also leads to dental decay, with a disproportionate impact on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

While there is an element of personal responsibility in both the treatment and prevention of obesity, dental decay and other diet-related diseases, this can only be achieved if the environment enables healthier choices and if everyone in society has equitable access to healthy, affordable food. Government also recognises this, with these issues forming the basis of the UK’s Childhood Obesity Plan, the first chapter of which was released in 2016. However, four years on we've seen far more lengthy consultation processes than we've seen action, despite the clear benefit the measures would have on the health of children and adults alike.

We are encouraged that you are ready to take much-needed action to address obesity but the three chapters of the Childhood Obesity Plan cannot be forgotten. Our traffic-light Scorecard 2020: The road to preventing obesity shows how close many of the recommendations are to becoming a reality to improve the lives of both children and adults living with obesity.

Prime Minister: only you can ensure progress on this leading plan and secure a healthy future for the next generation. The time has come to give the Childhood Obesity Plan the green light.

Signed:

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Professor Feng He, Professor of Global Health Research, Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine, Barts & The London School of Medicine and Dentistry

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Professor Simon Capewell, Public Health and Policy, University of Liverpool

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Professor Paul Dodson, Consultant Physician in Diabetes, Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham

Professor Jacob George, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Therapeutics, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee and Director of R&D, NHS Tayside

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Dr Wayne Sunman, Consultant in Geriatric Medicine, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

Professor Jack Winkler, Emeritus Professor of Nutrition Policy, London Metropolitan University

Professor David Haslam, Physician in Obesity Management, International Obesity Forum

Neville Rigby, Convener, International Obesity Forum

Katharine Jenner, Chief Executive, Blood Pressure UK

Caroline Cerny, Obesity Health Alliance Lead, Obesity Health Alliance

Barbara Crowther, Coordinator, Children’s Food Campaign

Dr Maria Bryant, Associate Professor of Diet and Obesity, University of Leeds, Chair of the Association for the Study of Obesity (ASO)

Anthony Davidson, Founder, BigBarn CIC

Dr Charlotte Jeavons, Oral Health Promotion Lead and Maria Morgan, President Elect, British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD)

Mick Armstrong, Chair, British Dental Association

Andy Burman, Chief Executive, British Dietetic Association

John Maingay, Director of Policy and Influencing, British Heart Foundation

Pamela Healy OBE, Chief Executive, British Liver Trust

Harpreet Brrang, Information & Research Hub Manager, Children’s Liver Disease Foundation

Chris Askew, Chief Executive, Diabetes UK
Mr Matthew Garrett, Dean of the Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England

Dr Helen Crawley, Director, First Steps Nutrition Trust

Louise T Davies, Founder, Food Teachers Centre

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Sally Bunday, Director, The Hyperactive Children’s Support Group

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Rob Percival, Head of Policy, Soil Association

Kate Oldridge-Turner, Head of Policy, World Cancer Research Fund

CC:
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport