

Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
For Immediate Release

Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition Welcomes Minister Blackman's Commitment to Healthier School Environments

Bridgetown, Barbados — (December 3, 2025) — The Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition (BCOPC) applauds Minister of Educational Transformation Chad Blackman for taking decisive action to ensure that children across Barbados have access to healthier food and beverage options both in and around schools.

Minister Blackman announced his intention to personally lead island-wide checks on vendors operating outside school gates, emphasizing the urgent need to protect students from the easy availability of sugar-sweetened drinks and ultra-processed snacks. COPC strongly supports this commitment and views it as a critical step toward reducing Barbados' soaring rates of childhood obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Barbados is facing an NCD endemic, with children increasingly at risk of preventable illnesses linked to unhealthy eating patterns. While the 2023 School Nutrition Policy mandates improved nutrition standards within school compounds, the ongoing sale of high-sugar and high-fat products mere steps from school gates has undermined progress.

"The Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition applauds the leadership of the Minister of Educational Transformation, Hon. Chad Blackman, as it relates to implementation and enforcement of the School Nutrition Policy, not only within our schools but outside their gates. We pledge our continued support to him as the Ministry works with us and others to secure the health of our children and our Nation. In this regard, we urge prompt implementation and passage of the Vending Bill, which would allow for legal support to these efforts to ensure compliance with the School Nutrition Policy outside school gates," said Nicole Foster, Chair of the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition.

Meanwhile, the CEO of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. said, "The School Nutrition Policy was launched in 2023, and it is this type of strong leadership that is required now to ensure our children's health is prioritized at such a critical time. We thank the Minister for taking this hands-on approach to secure the health of generations in our educational system."

The Coalition also welcomes the Minister's assurances that the effort will not be punitive but grounded in fairness, dialogue, and partnership. BCOPC recognizes the critical role vendors play in communities and stands ready to collaborate on training, product reformulation, and guidance on meeting health-food standards. Healthy vending is not just a public health

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priority—it is an economic opportunity. We encourage vendors and young entrepreneurs to innovate and capitalize on the growing market for affordable, nutritious products.

Minister Blackman’s hands-on approach—including planned visits to schools to observe vendor offerings—is aligned with the Coalition’s long-standing call for a more coordinated strategy to strengthen the School Nutrition Policy beyond the school fence.

“Every Barbadian child has the right to a safe and healthy food environment,” the Coalition emphasized. “We commend the Minister for championing this cause and call on parents, vendors, educators, and the private sector to join in transforming our food culture. This is about safeguarding our children’s future.”

About the Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

The Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition is an alliance of health organizations, educators, civil society groups, and community advocates working to create a healthier Barbados for future generations. COPC promotes evidence-based policies that reduce children’s risk of obesity and NCDs, including healthier school environments, responsible marketing practices, and improved access to nutritious foods.

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