

News Release

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, September 14, 2006

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**Children's Advocates Call for Removal of BusRadio and Channel One
from Massachusetts Schools**

Children's advocates sent emails today to every school superintendent in Massachusetts, asking them "not to allow BusRadio or Channel One to operate in your school." BusRadio and Channel One are companies that compel captive audiences of school children to watch or listen to advertising. BusRadio, based in Needham, MA, plays eight minutes of ads per hour to children in school buses.

The emails were endorsed by 40 organizations and 64 children's advocates. Endorsers include the American Family Association, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Consumers Union, Eagle Forum, Global Exchange and the National PTA, as well as the National Council of Churches Committee on Public Education and Literacy and the Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Child Advocacy.

The emails are the part of a new campaign to remove BusRadio and Channel One from every school in the United States. The campaign is organized by Commercial Alert, the Center for a New American Dream and Obligation, Inc.

The groups also sent letters today to the 100 leading national advertisers and the top 50 advertising agencies, requesting that they pledge not to advertise on BusRadio and Channel One.

Following is today's email to Massachusetts school superintendents.

Dear Superintendent:

As you may know, there is a new company called BusRadio that is asking schools to install its radio equipment in school buses in Massachusetts. In exchange for this equipment, the company requires schools to play its programming on school buses, including eight minutes of advertising each hour, to children as young as six years old. The company's business model is similar to Channel One, which uses classrooms to play two minutes of TV advertising to children each school day.

We believe it is wrong to use the Massachusetts compulsory school attendance law to force children to listen to or watch advertising. We strongly urge you not to allow BusRadio or Channel One to operate in your school.

Sincerely,
Action Coalition for Media Education
Alliance for Childhood

American Family Association
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
Center for a New American Dream
Center for Community and Corporate Ethics
Center for Ecoliteracy
Center for Food & Justice, UEPI, Occidental College
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center for Screen-Time Awareness
Children Now
Children's Health Environmental Coalition
Coalition for Commercial-Free Schools
Concerned Women for America
Commercial Alert
Consumer Action
Consumers Union
Corporate Ethics International
Dads & Daughters
Eagle Forum
Essential Action
Global Citizen Center
Global Exchange
Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids
Massachusetts Public Health Association
MomsRising
National Council of Churches Committee on Public Education and Literacy
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Obligation, Inc.
Organic Consumers Association
Parents' Action for Children
Simple Living Network
Sojourners
Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE)
The Motherhood Project
The Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Child Advocacy
The Simplicity Forum
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Vermont Earth Institute

Cecile Andrews, author, *The Circle of Simplicity*

Joan Blades, co-founder, MoveOn.org; co-author, *Motherhood Manifesto*

Dina Borzekowski, EdD, Assistant Professor, Department of Health, Behavior and Society,
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

David Bosworth, Associate Professor, Creative Writing Program, Department of English,
University of Washington

T. Berry Brazelton, MD, Professor of Pediatrics, Emeritus, Harvard Medical School, Children's Hospital Boston; Founder, Brazelton Touchpoints Center; co-author, *Touchpoints 0-3* and *Touchpoints 3-6*

Brita Butler-Wall, PhD, Member, Seattle School Board; Executive Director, Citizens' Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools

Raffi Cavoukian, singer, author, founder of Child Honoring

Dimitri A. Christakis, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Director, Child Health Institute, University of Washington School of Medicine; co-author, *The Elephant in the Living Room: Make Television Work for Your Kids*

Thomas J. Cottle, PhD, Professor of Education, Boston University; author, *When the Music Stopped*, *Sense of Self* and *At Peril*

Donald R. Davis, PhD, Research Associate, Biochemical Institute, University of Texas at Austin

John De Graaf, co-author, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*

Nathan Dungan, President and Founder, Share, Save, Spend; author, *Prodigal Sons & Material Girls*

Teresa K. Duryea, MD, Associate Professor, Academic General Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine

The Rev. O. C. Edwards, Jr., Episcopal priest (retired); Co-chair, National Council of Churches Faith & Order Commission

Marjorie V. Fields, EdD, Professor Emeritus, Early Childhood Education, University of Alaska SE

Roy F. Fox, Professor and Chair, Department of Learning, Teaching, & Curriculum, University of Missouri-Columbia; author, *Harvesting Minds* and *MediaSpeak*

Henry A. Giroux, PhD, Global Television Network Chair Professor, English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University; author, *America on the Edge*, *The Abandoned Generation*, and *Teachers as Intellectuals*

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Joan Gussow, EdD, M. S. Rose Professor Emeritus, Nutrition and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

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Hal Hamilton, Executive Director, Sustainability Institute

Jacqueline Hamilton, Executive Director, Educational Consortium of Central LA

Randy Hayes, Executive Director, International Forum on Globalization

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Velma LaPoint, PhD, Professor, Department of Human Development & Psychoeducational Studies, Howard University

Frances Moore Lappe, author, *Diet for a Small Planet* and *Democracy's Edge*; co-author, *Hope's Edge*

Diane E. Levin, PhD, Professor of Education, Wheelock College; author, *Remote Control Childhood*

David Marshak, PhD, Professor, College of Education, Seattle University

Robert McChesney, PhD, Research Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; author, *The Problem of the Media*

Bob McCannon, Founding Executive Director, The New Mexico Media Literacy Project

Bernard McGrane, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology, Chapman University; author, *The Un-TV and the 10 Mph Car*

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Peggy O'Mara, editor and publisher, Mothering Magazine

Kathleen G. Nelson, MD, FAAP, Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Professor of Pediatrics, University of Alabama School of Medicine

Marion Nestle, PhD, MPH, Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University; author, *Food Politics*, *Safe Food* and *What to Eat*

Terry Parsons, Staff Officer for Stewardship, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America

Mary Pipher, author, *Reviving Ophelia*, *Writing to Change the World* and *Letters to a Young Therapist*

Alvin F. Poussaint, MD, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; Director, Media Center, Judge Baker Children's Center

Vicki Robin, co-author, *Your Money or Your Life*

Jeanne and Dick Roy, Co-Founders, Northwest Earth Institute

John Ruby, DMD, PhD, Associate Professor of Pediatric Dentistry, School of Dentistry, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Susan Sarandon

Juliet Schor, PhD, Professor, Department of Sociology, Boston College; author, *Born to Buy*, *The Overspent American* and *The Overworked American*

Donald Shifrin, MD, FAAP, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, University of Washington School of Medicine

Michele Simon, JD, MPH, Adjunct Professor, University of California, Hastings College of the Law; author, *Appetite for Profit*

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Charles Terry, former President, The Philanthropic Collaborative

Julie Taylor, Children, Youth and Family Advocacy, Women's Division, United Methodist Church

Rev. Romal J. Tune, CEO Clergy Strategic Alliances, LLC

Jeff Weissglass, Board Chair, More Than Money Institute

Frederick J. Zimmerman, PhD, Associate Professor, Departments of Health Services & Pediatrics, University of Washington; co-author, *The Elephant in the Living Room: Make Television Work for Your Kids*

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Following is today's letter to the leading national advertisers and ad agencies.

Dear Corporate/Ad Agency Leader:

As you know, advertising is now commonplace in the public schools. Yet, many advertising and marketing professionals have deep misgivings about marketing to school children. According to a 2004 Harris poll of youth advertising and marketing professionals, only 45% "feel that today's young people can handle advertising in schools." Not surprisingly, 47% believe that "schools should be a protected area" and that "there should not be advertising to students on school grounds."

We are writing to ask for your help to turn your industry's conscience into a reality, and to protect our children and their education from aggressive marketers.

Channel One is a highly controversial in-school marketing company that delivers televised content to nearly 11,500 schools throughout the nation. In exchange for video equipment, these schools now spend one full school week each year watching television, including one full school day just for the ads. According to the Harris poll, 61% of youth marketing professionals believe that it is "inappropriate" for companies like Channel One to "provid[e] instructional material that integrates brand names and products into the lessons."

BusRadio is the newest foray of advertisers into public schools. It seeks to install special radio equipment into school buses that will carry that company's offerings, including eight minutes of ads per hour. In its contract with school districts, BusRadio does not rule out advertising any particular type of products. If Channel One is any guide, we might expect BusRadio to advertise junk food, soda pop, violent and sexualized entertainment, and movies that encourage school children to smoke tobacco.

Whatever BusRadio advertises, children as young as six will have no choice as to whether to listen or not. Nor will their parents be able to exercise any control over their children's exposure. The sales pitches will fill the bus and interfere with those children who want to read,

study, talk, pray, or do almost anything else other than listen to the programming. According to the Harris poll, 69% of youth advertising and marketing professionals believe that “advertising on school buses” is “inappropriate.”

We agree with these professionals. We believe it is wrong for a company to use compulsory school attendance laws to force a captive audience of children to listen to advertising. As most practitioners in the field recognize, successful advertising depends on the willing participation of both advertiser and consumer. BusRadio and Channel One violate this fundamental principle.

We are asking your [company/agency] to pledge by October 15 not to buy advertising on BusRadio or Channel One. We hope you will join with us and affirm that school children should not be compelled to listen to or watch advertising.

We will follow up with you in the next two weeks about whether your [company/agency] will make this pledge. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss at your convenience the issues in this letter. Please feel free to call Jim Metrock of Obligation, Inc. at (205) 822-0080, Gary Ruskin of Commercial Alert at (503) 235-8012, or Monique Tilford of the Center for a New American Dream at (301) 891-3683. We look forward to your reply.

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For background about BusRadio, see: <http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/busradio> and <http://www.obligation.org/busradiohome.php>

For background about Channel One, see:
<http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/channel-one> and
<http://www.obligation.org/channelonehome.php>

Commercial Alert's mission is to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy. For more information, see <http://www.commercialalert.org>.

The Center for a New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice. We work with individuals, institutions, communities, and businesses to conserve natural resources, counter the commercialization of our culture, and promote positive changes in the way goods are produced and consumed. For more information, see: <http://www.NewDream.org/noschoolads>.

Obligation, Inc. works to remind businesses and governments of their responsibility to children. For more information, see: <http://www.obligation.org>.