

June 18th, 2025

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Scott Bessent
Secretary of the Treasury of the United
States
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Secretary Bessent,

We, the undersigned organizations, write today to call your attention to the negative health effects of alcohol and to ask you to inform consumers by moving forward with alcohol labeling proposals that will help fulfill President Trump's goal of Making America Healthy Again.

Excess consumption of alcohol is associated with injuries, motor vehicle accidents, and multiple chronic diseases, including liver disease and cardiovascular disease,¹ and is a leading cause of preventable cancer.² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that, in 2020-2021 (the most recent year of data available), 178,000 deaths in the U.S. were attributable to excessive alcohol use (both acute and chronic).³

Alcohol is not only a risk factor for adults, but also impacts the health of children, a key priority focus for this Administration. While alcohol consumption is illegal for those under the age of 21, the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 14.6% of those age 12-20 years surveyed (about 5 million young people) had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.⁴ The CDC further estimates that, in 2020-2021, over 3,000 deaths in the 0-19 year age group were attributable to the harmful effects of alcohol intake.³ And in 2022, in the 12-17 year age group, 753,000 people had alcohol use disorder, a chronic condition.⁵ This key risk factor should be included as the Administration moves forward with its efforts to address chronic disease in adults and children.

Addressing alcohol consumption is critical, and the federal government has made some progress recently in developing policies to improve the transparency and safety of alcohol through improved labeling and education. First, the Surgeon General released an advisory on alcohol cancer risks that could inform updates to the alcohol cancer warnings and other consumer education initiatives.² That advisory, titled "Alcohol and Cancer Risk," reported that alcohol consumption increases the risk of seven different types of cancer and that for some cancers risk may start to increase at just one drink per day or fewer.² However, the current alcohol health warning, required by statute, does not mention the link between alcohol and cancer, instead simply stating, "GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the Surgeon General, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2)

Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems.”⁶ While amending this warning would require an Act of Congress, the TTB is directed by statute to make recommendations to Congress when such updates are necessary. With the Surgeon General advisory in hand and no update in the warning since 1988,⁷ the TTB is now well-positioned to make such a report, a move long urged by advocates.⁸

Second, the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) is currently engaged in a proceeding to require nutrition and food allergen labeling, informing consumers about the contents of alcohol.^{9,10} The TTB has proposed rules to require nutrition and food allergen labeling on alcohol, and recently also proposed, then withdrew, an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking requiring ingredient labeling. Alcohol contributes to diet-related chronic diseases by providing consumers with extra calories, added sugars, and other nutrients that Americans are already consuming in excessive amounts. For example, alcohol contributes on average 9% of daily calories for those who drink.¹¹ In addition, most alcohol lacks food allergen labeling, preventing the roughly 11% of adults with food allergies from making informed purchasing choices to avoid unnecessary risk.¹² Ingredients added to alcohol also are not required to be disclosed, further impairing transparency for consumers with food allergies and, more generally, anyone who wishes to avoid certain additives. More than 70 additives may be added to wine without being labeled^{13,14} and at least 30 color additives are allowed in limited amounts in non-wine alcoholic beverages.¹⁵ The role of synthetic colors and other additives is a major concern of the Administration.

Better transparency in alcohol labeling is popular with consumers. In a March 2024 poll of 1,509 adults who drink alcohol, most supported labeling of ingredients (74%), food allergens (65%), calories (66%), and nutritional content (64%).¹⁶

We therefore urge you to ensure these efforts are prioritized by the Administration by:

- Appointing Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission;
- Recommending that the TTB move forward with mandatory labeling of nutrition, food allergens, and ingredients in alcohol; and
- Recommending that TTB take the necessary steps to request that Congress amend the alcohol warning to include cancer risk.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Advocates for Better Children's Diets
Alcohol Justice
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Connections, Inc.
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Reports
CURED Nfp
Food Allergy Research and Education
Food Equality Initiative
Interfaith Public Health Network
International FPIES Association (IFPIES)
Jones County Safe and Healthy Youth Coalition
Mercer County Commission
Minnesota Prevention Alliance
National Consumers League
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives
North Fayette Valley Community Coalition
Project Extra Mile
Recover Alaska
Tampa Alcohol Coalition
Texans For Safe and Drug-Free Youth
U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance

Individuals

David Jernigan, PhD
Professor, Boston University School of Public Health

Elizabeth Farkouh, MD, MS
Resident Physician, Brigham & Women's Hospital

Elizabeth Jones, JD
Director of Policy and Strategy, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth

Kaela Plank
Health Program Planner, San Francisco Department of Public Health

Lisa Young, PhD, RDN
Adjunct professor of nutrition, New York University

Luis Seija, MD, MSHP
Postdoctoral Fellow, National Clinician Scholars Program - University of Pennsylvania

Paul Gilbert, PhD, ScM
Associate Professor, University of Iowa

Tim Naimi, MD, MPH
Director, Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research

References

1. World Health Organization. *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health*. 2018. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/274603/9789241565639-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
2. Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. *Alcohol and Cancer Risk: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory*. 2025. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/oash-alcohol-cancer-risk.pdf>
3. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Alcohol Related Disease Impact (ARDI) Application: Annual Average for United States 2020-2021 Alcohol-Attributable Deaths Due to Excessive Alcohol Use*. 2024. Accessed June 2, 2025. https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH_ARDI/Default/Report.aspx?T=AAM&P=F1F85724-AEC5-4421-BC88-3E8899866842&R=EACE3036-77C9-4893-9F93-17A5E1FEBE01&M=7F40785C-D481-440A-970F-50EFBD21B35B&L=&F=AAMCauseAgeGroupAllNew&D=H
4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Highlights for the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. 2024. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH%202023%20Annual%20Release/2023-nsduh-main-highlights.pdf>
5. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. *Results from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables Table 5.9A – Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year: Among People Aged 12 or Older; by Age Group and Demographic Characteristics, Numbers in Thousands, 2022 and 2023*. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2025.
6. 27 C.F.R. § 16.21.
7. H.R.5210 - Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988.
8. Center for Science in the Public Interest, American Institute for Cancer Research, Consumer Federation of America, U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance. *CSPI Letter to Surgeon General Designate Re: Alcohol Labeling*. 2020. Accessed May 27, 2025. <https://www.cspinet.org/resource/letter-dr-vivek-murthy-nominee-us-surgeon-general-re-labeling-alcoholic-beverages>
9. 90 Fed. Reg. 6654. Alcohol Facts Statements in the Labeling of Wines, Distilled Spirits, and Malt Beverages.
10. 90 Fed. Reg. 5763 Major Food Allergen Labeling for Wines, Distilled Spirits, and Malt Beverages.
11. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. *Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee: Advisory Report to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Part D. Chapter 11: Alcoholic Beverages*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service; 2020. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/PartD_Ch11_AlcoholicBev_first-print.pdf
12. Gupta RS, Warren CM, Smith BM, et al. Prevalence and Severity of Food Allergies Among US Adults. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2019;2(1):e185630. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.5630
13. 27 C.F.R. § 4.32.
14. 27 C.F.R § 24.246 (c).
15. U.S. Department of the Treasury: Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. *Limited Ingredients*. 2014. Accessed March 18, 2024. <https://www.ttb.gov/scientific-services-division/limited-ingredients>
16. Big Village's CARAVAN U.S. Online Omnibus Survey, administered March 15-20, 2024. Results available at: https://www.cspinet.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/Alcohol%20labeling%20fact%20sheet_FINAL%20PDF%20%281%29.pdf.