

Media Statement

*For Immediate Release
September 30, 2003*

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**Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth Statement Regarding U.S. Senate
Hearing on Underage Drinking**

*Statement Attributable to Jim O'Hara, Executive Director, Center on Alcohol
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Washington, DC - Today's hearing marks an important recognition of the scope and devastating consequences of underage drinking for our youth and our families. It builds upon the findings of the National Research Council/Institute of Medicine report, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, by continuing the important conversation on how we can reduce the alarmingly high rates of underage drinking. The NRC/IOM report states unequivocally that, at every level, we need to do more to protect our kids and we need to do so now.

One way of protecting our children is by limiting the amount of alcohol advertising to which they are exposed. The beer and distilled spirits industries, as of this month, have committed not to place alcohol advertising on the radio, on television shows and in magazines where the underage audience is 30% or more of the total audience. This is a significant reduction from the previous industry threshold of 50%, yet falls short of the IOM-recommended 15% standard. The key public policy question is what advertising standards best protect the health and safety of our children.

As we engage in the policy debate over how best to balance our public health goals with the rightful economic self-interest of the alcohol companies, there are several reasonable steps outlined by the IOM that our Public Health Service can act on today. By committing to a better coordinated and financed federal effort against underage drinking, by educating adults about the dangers of underage drinking and how they can protect their children, and by filling the key gaps in our public health surveillance by monitoring youth exposure to alcohol advertising as well as the brand preferences of underage drinkers, we can assist parents and communities in their efforts against underage drinking.

We applaud Subcommittee Chairman DeWine and Senator Dodd for holding this important hearing and appreciate their leadership on the issue.