Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to express our support for the inclusion of calorie and health information on alcohol product labels. We agree with you on the importance of consumer choice and that it is only fair to give individuals the right information to make good decisions about their food and drink. However, when it comes to alcohol, consumers are not currently provided with the information they need.

The majority of the public agrees and wants to know what is in their drinks, so we were disappointed to see how the Government’s plan to introduce better alcohol labelling was covered in parts of the media recently. New research shows that 75% of people want the number of units in a product on alcohol labels, 61% want calorie information, and 53% want the amount of sugar.

Displaying calorie information on alcohol labels can empower people to take control of their health. Alcohol is very energy dense, with a large glass of white wine having the equivalent calories as a slice of pizza. For those who drink, alcohol accounts for nearly 10% of the daily calorie intake, with around 3.4 million adults consuming an additional days’ worth of calories each week – totalling an additional two months of food each year. Yet, the majority of the public (80%) is unaware of the calorie content of common drinks.

In addition to calorie labelling, we support providing further health information on alcohol labels, including the Chief Medical Officers’ low-risk drinking guidelines. Alcohol is linked to 80 deaths a day in the UK, and yet, alcohol harm is poorly understood by drinkers: only one in five people know the drinking guidelines, and only one in ten can spontaneously identify cancer as a health consequence of alcohol. Alcohol labels are an effective tool to change that: a study in Canada showed that consumers exposed to health warnings on labels were three times more likely to be aware of the drinking guidelines, and were also more likely to know about the link between alcohol and cancer.

The current voluntary system of alcohol labelling is not working. Legislation is now necessary to empower consumers and provide transparency. Despite the Government’s efforts to encourage alcohol producers to reflect the drinking
guidelines on labels, research by the Alcohol Health Alliance shows that more than 70% of the labels reviewed did not include the up-to-date guidelines.

We commend the Government’s decision to consult on alcohol calorie labelling and encourage you to use this opportunity to include wider health information, such as the Chief Medical Officers’ drinking guidelines, to empower people to make informed health choices and reduce alcohol harm.

Yours sincerely,

Sir David Amess MP for Southend West
Dan Carden MP for Liverpool, Walton
Dr James Davies MP for Vale of Clwyd
Patricia Gibson MP for North Ayrshire and Arran
Rachel Hopkins MP for Luton South
Kenny MacAskill MP for East Lothian
John McDonnell MP for Hayes and Harlington
Catherine McKinnell MP for Newcastle upon Tyne North
Grahame Morris MP for Easington
Andrew Selous MP for South West Bedfordshire
Derek Thomas MP for St Ives
Christian Wakeford MP for Bury South
Dr Philippa Whitford MP for Central Ayrshire
Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
Lord Balfe
Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe
The Lord Bishop of Carlisle
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff
Baroness Jenkin of Kennington
Baroness Jolly
Baroness Masham of Ilton
Lord Ramsbotham

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance UK
Andrew Goddard, President, Royal College of Physicians
Professor Ravi Mahajan, President, Royal College of Anaesthetists
Professor Colin Drummond, Faculty of Addictions, Royal College of Psychiatrists
Professor Dame Parveen Kumar, Chair of British Medical Association Board of Science
Matthew Garrett, Dean, Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England
Christina Marriott, Chief Executive, Royal Society for Public Health
Professor Linda Bauld, Director, SPECTRUM Consortium
Emlyn Samuel, Director of Policy, Cancer Research UK
Dr Katherine Severi, Chief Executive, Institute of Alcohol Studies
Dr Richard Piper, Chief Executive Officer, Alcohol Change UK
Pamela Healy OBE, Chief Executive, British Liver Trust
Steven Masson, Alcohol Lead, British Society of Gastroenterology
Alison Douglas, CEO, Alcohol Focus Scotland
Dr Alastair MacGilchrist, Chair, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)
Lord Ribeiro

Sue Taylor, Acting Head of Alcohol Policy, Balance

Hilary Henriques MBE, CEO, Nacoa

Dr Jenny Lisle, Medical Council on Alcohol

Natalie Day, Chief Executive, Foundation for Liver Research

Professor Guruprasad Aithal, President, British Association for the Study of the Liver (BASL)

Kate Oldridge-Turner, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, World Cancer Research Fund International

Dr Anna E Livingstone, Doctors in UNITE

Kate Halliday, Executive Director, Addiction Professionals

Justina Murray, CEO, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

Pauline Campbell, Vice Chair, Northern Ireland Alcohol and Drugs Alliance

Eric Appleby, Chair, Alcohol and Families Alliance

Paul Townsley, CEO, Humankind

Vivienne Evans, Chief Executive, Adfam

Julie Bass, Chief Executive, Turning Point

Oliver Standing, Director, Collective Voice

Terry Martin, Founder, Alcohelp

Katharine Jenner, CEO, Blood Pressure UK

Professor Graham MacGregor CBE, Chairman of Action on Sugar and Action on Salt

Anna Dixon, CEO, Centre for Ageing Better

Andy Burman, CEO, The British Dietetic Association

Dr Maria Bryant, Chair, UK Association for the Study of Obesity

Caroline Cerny, Alliance Lead, Obesity Health Alliance
Kathy Lewis, Acting chair/ Vice chair, Caroline Walker Trust

Dr Miles C Allison, Acting Chair, Welsh Liver Plan Implementation Group

Wayne Gault, Lead Officer Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership

Lee Wilson, Head of the Forward Leeds and North Yorkshire Horizons alcohol and drug services

David Aitken, Interim Head of Adult services / ADP Chair, East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Wendy McConnachie, Alcohol and Drug Development officer, NHS Shetland

Jillian Galloway, Chair, Angus Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Health Equalities Group

John Mooney FFPH, Chair of FPH UK Special Interest Group on Alcohol

Diane Goslar, Service User, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Professor Martin McKee CBE, Professor of European Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Alan Brennan, Professor of Health Economics and Decision Modelling, ScHARR, School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield

Mark Petticrew, Professor of Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Professor Niamh Fitzgerald, Professor of Alcohol Policy, Director, Institute for Social Marketing & Health, University of Stirling

Anna Gilmore, Professor of Public Health & Director, Tobacco Control Research Group (TCRG), University of Bath

Professor Jim McCambridge, Professor Addictive Behaviours & Public Health, University of York

Rachael Murray, Professor of Population Health, University of Nottingham
Professor Jonathan Shepherd CBE, Crime and Security Research Institute, Cardiff University

Jamie Brown, Professor of Behavioural Science and Health, University College London Tobacco and Alcohol Research Group

Professor Kate Hunt PhD, Professor of Behavioural Sciences and Health, Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling

Professor Simon Moore, Professor of Public Health Research, Cardiff University

Professor Alison McCallum, Centre for Population Health Sciences, Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh

Keith Humphreys, Ph.D., Esther Ting Memorial Professor, Stanford University

Angela Attwood, Associate Professor, Tobacco and Alcohol Research Group, University of Bristol

Dr Tony Rao, Consultant Psychiatrist and Visiting Research Fellow, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust/Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience

Dr Sadie Boniface, Institute of Alcohol Studies and King’s College London

Dr Tom Hird, Research Fellow, Tobacco Control Research Group, University of Bath

Dr Allen Gallagher, Research Associate, University of Bath

Crispin Acton, Expert Adviser, Institute of Alcohol Studies

Chris Record, Consultant Hepatologist, Newcastle University

Dr Olivia Maynard, University of Bristol

Professor Frank Murray MD, Chair, Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland

Dr Sheila Gilheany, CEO, Alcohol Action Ireland