

June 11, 2021

Jose Cil, CEO of Restaurant Brands International  
Christopher Finazzo, President, Burger King Americas  
Restaurant Brands International,  
130 King Street West, Suite 300  
Toronto, Ontario M5X 1E1

**RE: PFAS in food packaging**

Dear Mr. Cil and Mr. Finazzo:

On behalf of organizations dedicated to safeguarding children's health, we are writing today to urge Burger King to phase out and ban the use of all food packaging and food-contact materials that contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1 in 6 American children have a learning, attention, or developmental disability. The incidence of these types of disabilities is rising every year at an alarming pace, especially for autism and ADHD. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that environmental factors, including toxic chemicals, cause or contribute to at least a quarter of learning and developmental disabilities in American children. Scientists have learned that the developing human brain is much more susceptible to toxic substances than the adult brain and that even tiny amounts of certain chemicals can do lasting harm to the developing brain, at levels that were once thought to be safe.

Scientists are concerned that exposure to PFAS chemicals are increasing our risk of developing serious health problems<sup>1</sup> and there is concern that PFAS exposure may impact the growth, learning, and behavior of infants and young children.

We are alarmed by a recent study published by the Mind the Store campaign and Toxic-Free Future that found that some Burger King's food packaging, including the packaging for the Whopper, nuggets, and cookies, may contain PFAS chemicals.<sup>2</sup> The packaging is used once, but once disposed of, the PFAS chemicals can last forever in the environment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that: "Scientists are still learning about the health effects of exposure to PFAS. Some studies have shown that PFAS exposure may affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children; lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant; interfere with the body's natural hormones; increase cholesterol levels; affect the immune system; and increase the risk of cancer."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.estlett.0c00255>

<sup>2</sup> <https://saferchemicals.org/packaged-in-pollution/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0923-cdc-atsdr-award-pfas-study.html>



Learning Disabilities  
Association of America



## HEALTHY CHILDREN PROJECT

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In testimony before the U.S. Senate in 2019, Dr. Linda Birnbaum, the former head of the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and National Toxicology Program (NTP), stated: “The research conducted to date reveals associations between PFAS exposures and a variety of specific adverse human health outcomes. These include the potential for effects on children’s cognitive and neurobehavioral development, immune system dysfunction, endocrine disruption, obesity, diabetes, lipid metabolism, and cancer.”<sup>4</sup>

Biomonitoring studies have shown that nearly every person in the U.S., including newborns, has PFAS in their bloodstream. Drinking water and other dietary sources are considered to be the largest exposure pathway to PFAS. Reducing and eliminating PFAS in food packaging could help reduce our exposure to these chemicals.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has stated that, in general, infants and children are more vulnerable to chemical exposures and that substantial improvements to the food additives regulatory system are urgently needed. But at a time when the federal government is failing to meaningfully regulate chemicals such as PFAS in food contact materials, it is more important than ever for businesses like Burger King to act.

Other major quick-service restaurants including McDonald’s, Wendy’s, Taco Bell, Panera Bread, Cava, Chipotle, Freshii, and Sweetgreen have all announced action to eliminate PFAS chemicals in food packaging. In contrast, Burger King has not announced a clear policy or timeline to phase out and ban these harmful chemicals.

We hope that we can agree that no child or pregnant woman should be exposed to chemicals that may harm their health through the food they eat. As one of the largest fast-food chains in the U.S. and the world, Burger King has a responsibility to act.

**We strongly urge you to adopt a public policy to expeditiously ban PFAS in all Burger King’s and Restaurant Brands International’s food packaging and food-contact materials in the United States and globally.** We also urge you to adopt a comprehensive safer chemicals policy to ensure other hazardous chemicals, such as *ortho*-phthalates and bisphenols, are also not used in food-contact materials.

We would appreciate your response to our concerns and recommendations by **July 1, 2021**. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tracy Gregoire, Director of the Healthy Children Project  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
[tracy@lidaamerica.org](mailto:tracy@lidaamerica.org), (412) 341-1515 x 6

Maureen Swanson, Director of Environmental Risk Reduction  
The Arc of the United States

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/2/2/22ca7c4b-b1dc-4a12-9264-7a4f16608933/BF2D70A4FB747A3F61E584CC30D58D0A.birnbaum-testimony-03.28.2019.pdf](https://www.epw.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/2/2/22ca7c4b-b1dc-4a12-9264-7a4f16608933/BF2D70A4FB747A3F61E584CC30D58D0A.birnbaum-testimony-03.28.2019.pdf)



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