



Keck School of Medicine  
University of Southern California

April 30, 2014

Attn: First Lady Michelle Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**Childhood Obesity  
Research Center**

**Michael I. Goran, Ph.D.**

Director, and  
Professor of Preventive  
Medicine; Physiology and  
Biophysics; and Pediatrics

The Dr Robert C and  
Veronica Atkins Endowed  
Chair in Pediatric Obesity  
and Diabetes

[www.GoranLab.com](http://www.GoranLab.com)

Dear Ms. Obama,

As Professor of Preventive Medicine, Director of the Childhood Obesity Research Center and co-Director of the Diabetes and Obesity Research Institute at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine, I have a keen interest in the role of dietary sugars in obesity and adverse metabolic outcomes, especially in children. I therefore read with great interest your recently publicized remark that "(o)ur bodies don't know what to do with high-fructose corn syrup—and don't need it"—as well as the response of the Corn Refiners Association (CRA) that criticized you as "misinformed."<sup>1</sup>

I write because I share your concerns about HFCS. Scientific evidence increasingly supports the conclusion that excessive fructose consumption plays a causal role in many negative effects on health,<sup>2,3</sup> and is particularly problematic for infants and children.<sup>4</sup> These effects specific to fructose are in addition to the issues related to increased calories and is related to the way fructose is handled in the body.<sup>5</sup> HFCS is a man-made sweetener comprised of varying and unregulated proportions of fructose to glucose and other compounds.<sup>6</sup> Although common table sugar (sucrose) is also comprised of glucose and fructose, nature balances them in equal proportions, and joins them by a bond for which the human body produces an enzyme (sucrase) to break down before absorption into the bloodstream. Therefore, the body absorbs fructose from sucrose more slowly than fructose from HFCS.<sup>7</sup> My own research has also revealed that popular soft drinks sweetened with HFCS have 50% more fructose than glucose which is significantly different from the 50:50 ratio found in sucrose.<sup>8</sup> These differences between HFCS and sugar are meaningful to human health and are cause for public health concern.<sup>9,10</sup>

I therefore applaud you for publicly stating that "(o)ur bodies don't know what to do with high-fructose corn syrup—and don't need it." Of course, we all should be trying to moderate consumption of sugar, but eliminating HFCS from the diet can go a long way towards eliminating non-natural fructose and improving health outcomes in our population, especially among infants and children.

Sincerely,

Michael I Goran, PhD  
Professor of Preventive Medicine  
Director, Childhood Obesity Research Center

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