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CENTER ON
SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION

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January 2, 2020

Mr. Stefano Pessina
Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc.
200 Wilmot Rd
Deerfield, IL 60015

Dear Mr. Pessina and Ms. Barra:

I am writing with concern regarding the prominent display of *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* in your stores. At the National Center on Sexual Exploitation—a non-partisan nonprofit in Washington DC dedicated to addressing the full spectrum of sexual exploitation—we recognize the cultural influence your stores have when promoting different products.

Unfortunately, we believe your stores are promoting a message of male sexual entitlement and the sexual objectification of women by promoting the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* in your checkout aisles. **Will you commit to remove this annual magazine issue from the checkout aisles of your stores, permanently? Further, will you also commit to remove *Cosmopolitan* magazine from your checkout aisles?**

As you may know, after years of grassroots complaints, CVS Health decided to permanently remove *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* from checkout aisles. And in 2018, Walmart removed *Cosmopolitan* magazine from their 5,000+ stores. Will you follow this new best practice regarding sexually objectifying media?

Female athleticism should be celebrated, yet the central purpose of the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* is to objectify women as sexual objects. Sexual objectification has no place in your family-friendly store. And further, research has shown that *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* magazines showed similar concepts about sexuality and objectifying women's sexual attractiveness to the audience.¹

We recognize that your corporation wishes to promote healthy female

body positivity in magazine products, but *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue* and *Cosmopolitan* have failed to do this. Women of all demographics deserve more than being reduced to body parts for another's sexual desire. Women who have achieved remarkable athletic feats do not deserve to be put back into the box of male sexual accessibility.

Fast Facts About Sexual Objectification:

- Research shows that when someone is being objectified the objectifier is viewing them as if they do not possess a real, individual mind and as if they are less deserving of moral treatment.ⁱⁱ
- It is commonly accepted that media promoting these images are “likely to contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women (i.e., eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction).”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Another study found that the “frequency of exposure to men’s lifestyle magazines that objectify women, reality TV programs that objectify women, and pornography predicted more objectified cognitions about women, which, in turn, predicted stronger attitudes supportive of violence against women.”^{iv}
- Research on adolescents' reactions to objectifying magazines found that "when boys consumed sexualizing magazines more often, they expressed more gender-stereotypical beliefs about feminine courtship strategies over time.”^v

We believe your corporation would receive widespread support for distancing yourself from this outdated and sexist issue. Over the course of several years, we have heard from thousands of individuals who state that they wish they could go through check-out lines without being unwillingly confronted with the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue*. Will you commit to remove this annual magazine issue from the checkout aisles of your stores, permanently? And will you commit to remove *Cosmopolitan* magazine from your checkout aisles as well?

We welcome dialogue on these issues. You can contact us at public@ncose.com or 202-393-7245.

Respectfully,



Patrick Trueman
President & CEO
National Center on Sexual Exploitation

CC:
Ornella Barra, Co-Chief Operating Officer

ⁱ Krassas, et al. “Boxing Helena and Corseting Eunice: Sexual Rhetoric in *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* Magazines” <https://kmoser2.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/boxing-helena-and-corseting-eunice-sexual-rhetoric-in-cosmopolitan-and-playboy-magazines.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Loughnan, Steve, et al. “Objectification Leads to Depersonalization: The Denial of Mind and Moral Concern to Objectified Others.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Wiley-Blackwell, 8 May 2010, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ejsp.755.

iii Szymanski, Dawn M., et al. "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research 1ψ7." *The Counseling Psychologist*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2010, pp. 6–38., doi:10.1177/0011000010378402.

iv Wright, Paul J., and Robert S. Tokunaga. "Men's Objectifying Media Consumption, Objectification of Women, and Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2015, pp. 955–964., doi:10.1007/s10508-015-0644-8.

v Ward, L. Monique, et al. "The Impact of Men's Magazines on Adolescent Boys' Objectification and Courtship Beliefs." *Journal of Adolescence*, vol. 39, 2015, pp. 49–58., doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.12.004.