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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

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Reply to:

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John Weisz, PhD
President, CEO
Judge Baker Children's Center
53 Parker Hill Avenue
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Dear John,

It is with sadness and regret, and after considerable thought, that I must inform you I am withdrawing from accepting the World of Children award. I have been filled with great anguish since you and Kathy Cade abruptly informed me a number of weeks ago that you were pushing out the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood. This decision has caused a great deal of pain and stress for me and my staff. I find the timing of your decision to expel CCFC from Judge Baker very difficult to understand, coming just before I was to receive the World of Children award, which was supposed to be a celebration—not a repudiation—of my work. Splitting CCFC and the Media Center is like breaking up a close family. We have worked so well together over this fifteen year period and have accomplished much based on our shared perspectives, goals, and hard work.

You told me that the mission of CCFC—to protect children from harmful exploitation by corporate marketers—is not in line with the Judge Baker mission. Indeed, we were told that we could no longer criticize any corporations, even if they were exploiting children. You implied that advocacy on behalf of children was not a significant mission of JBCC. I respectfully disagree. I believe that it is the obligation of all health and mental health institutions, and professionals, to stand up to any entity that is harming children and to work hard to change the related societal forces. I believe that leading mental health centers should not limit their work on behalf of children solely to what transpires in laboratories and classrooms.

I have devoted much of my professional career to speaking out publicly on behalf of children, and I have mentored my staff and students to do the same. In convincing some of the biggest corporations in the world to change their marketing policies, CCFC's work has benefited not just the children directly served by Judge Baker, but children all over the world. Over the past ten years, you and the board have consistently urged us to link Judge Baker's name to the positive publicity CCFC and the Media Center have generated—in venues such as the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Good Morning America, Meet the Press and many others.

For these reasons, I am astonished that CCFC and the Media Center are being treated harshly after all of our positive contributions to JBCC. We have had numerable successes, including those under CCFC, which has established itself as one of the most important child advocacy organizations in the United States and perhaps in the world. Over the years, CCFC and the Media Center have gained major positive

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exposure for the JBCC, which has received praise nationally and around the world from our print, broadcast, and Internet appearances.

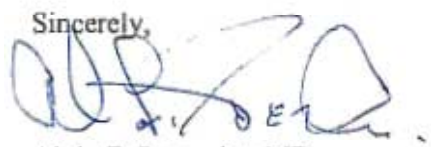
It is particularly appalling, that, when you informed me and my staff at the January 13th meeting that CCFC was no longer welcome at Judge Baker, you also told us that our work had to cease immediately. We were told that we could not conduct any advocacy that addressed a specific product or corporation with no exceptions. You even told us that we could not conduct an educational campaign to inform the public about toys that are potentially harmful to children's growth and development. The actions you have taken against us were arbitrary, unfair, and not in the best interest of children. In that meeting, our offer to negotiate some compromise so that the work could continue was refused outright.

It is also distressing that the Judge Baker COO informed me and my staff that we were not to talk to reporters about one of our most successful advocacy campaigns, despite the fact that we had information that was essential to promoting the health and well being of children. At the same time, when CCFC and my staff were attacked by a major corporation, you refused to support us.

Your actions have felt particularly demeaning to me since I have served at Judge Baker since 1978. During that period, I have been committed to the mission of Judge Baker, created important programs for JBCC, and helped raise a significant amount of money.

In view of your dismantling my program and repudiating my work and my beliefs about the importance of advocacy, it is meaningless for JBCC to give me the World of Children award. My career has been devoted to the importance of strong advocacy and social activism ever since I spent two years in Mississippi as a physician in the civil rights movement in the 1960's spearheading the desegregation of hospitals across the South. Because of my ongoing commitment, as a physician and a citizen, to social justice, it is a contradiction to my moral and ethical standards to accept the World of Children award from the Judge Baker Children's Center. Given the severe treatment of me and my staff for standing up for children, the ceremony would be a charade meant to display harmony, and mutual agreement that CCFC does not belong at Judge Baker. I cannot participate in a ceremony that I feel in my soul is hypocritical.

I appreciate all the work that many people on the staff have done on my behalf for the World of Children award. I am deeply sorry to have to disappoint them in order to maintain my integrity.

Sincerely,

Alvin F. Poussaint, MD

cc: Kathy Cade
Steve Schaffer
Michele Urbancic