No Fry Zone Opening Statement to Joint Oireachtas Committee Children and Youth Affairs

Good morning all, my name is Philip Moyles and I am the Chairperson of the No Fry Zone for Kids Committee based in Greystones Co. Wicklow.

I am a dad to 2 girls, Amy (2) in crèche and Jess (9) who is in St. Kevin’s primary school, Greystones.

In July 2013, a drive-thru fast food outlet was granted planning permission just 35 metres away from an education campus of three schools (2 primary and 1 post primary) of 1,850 students.

The location was completely inappropriate and unsuitable and as a group of concerned parents focused on our children’s health, we started our journey to try to prevent this. We have learnt so much about the planning process, county development plans and how the proximity of fast food outlets to schools can impact on childhood obesity.

To recap on some of the key points in our submission;

- Working with Wicklow councillors over an 18-month period (June 2015 to Dec 2016), a No Fry Zone objective, RT 17 was adopted into the Wicklow County Development 2016 – 2022.
- The important point to objective is that it included a specific distance of 400m where no new fast food / take-away outlets can be built or operated in proximity of schools or playgrounds during this time frame.
- The distance was chosen based on the evidence gathered in studies over the past 10 – 15 years in the US and Scandinavia.
- The studies show conclusively that obesity rates amongst school children increase by at least 25% when fast food outlets are located within 400metres of a school, particularly so in lower socio-economic areas,
  - Primarily due to the fact that within that distance (400m), a school child has enough time to access these unhealthy junk foods high in fat, salt and sugar at low prices at break times.
  - Additionally, these junk foods are promoted heavily targeting school children who are impressionable with money.
- Our No Fry Zone proposal received significant & credible support from leading Healthcare experts across the country through written submissions (58 in total) during the County Development Plan process and endorsements.
- Healthcare Experts such as
  - Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, (RCPI) Policy Obesity Group.
  - Association for the Study of Obesity on the Island of Ireland (ASOI).
  - Irish Heart Foundation. (IHF)
  - Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute (INDI)
  - Safefood
  - Healthy Eating Active Living Programme at the HSE.
  - Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)
  - Submission from Academia- DCU, DIT, NUI, TCD, UCC & UCD.
  - Individual Registered Dieticians, Nutritionists and healthcare personnel.
These councillors showed leadership, courage and prioritised children’s health in taking this step forward and become the 1st council in Ireland to implement a No Fry Zone of 400metres, the minimum distance required for it to be effective. They were recognised for this at the ASOI conference in the Royal College of Surgeons on the 14th May 2018.

There is a **Need** for No Fry Zones.

- No Fry Zones around schools of 400 metres will reduce the rate of obesity by preventing easy access of school children to unhealthy foods.
- No Fry Zones around schools will reduce the direct, constant and targeted promotion of these junk foods on school children.
- No Fry Zones around schools of 400 metres will ensure consistency in local planning when it comes to fast-food applications and proximity to schools. This is very much lacking today.
- No Fry Zones around schools will help re-shape the local planning frame-work to reduce the obesogenic environment (factors that encourage obesity) in our communities. This is an action, action 2.1 in Chapter 6, 6.2 Regulate for a healthier environment on page 39 of the A Healthy Weight for Ireland Obesity Policy and action plan 2016 – 2025.

Obesity is not a local issue but a national one. As happy as we are to have a No Fry Zone in Wicklow, we believe strongly that No Fry Zones should be implemented around schools across the country as soon as possible.

No Fry Zones will contribute to the health and wellbeing of children across Ireland and are part of the overall solution to tackle childhood obesity.