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Statement on *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*

Statement Attributable to Dr. David Jernigan, Executive Director, Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth

Washington, DC – The Surgeon General gave the nation an important diagnosis today: “Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among America’s youth.” In its comprehensive prescription to address the major public health issue, the Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking states that alcohol companies have a responsibility to see that youth are not disproportionately exposed to alcohol marketing, and that ongoing, independent monitoring of the placement of alcohol advertising is the surest way to enforce this standard.

In September 2003, alcohol industry trade associations agreed to restrict their advertising in measured media to outlets where youth comprise 30% or less of the audience. But more than two-thirds of youth exposure to alcohol advertising on radio and in magazines, and more than a third of youth exposure to alcohol ads on television comes when youth ages 12 to 20 – the group at greatest risk of underage drinking – are disproportionately likely to be in the audience even with this 30% threshold. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine in 2003 urged the industry to move its advertising to media where youth audiences are below 15%, roughly the proportion of youth ages 12 to 20 in the general population.

To reduce the appeal of alcohol to young people, the alcohol industry should heed the recommendations of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine and the Surgeon General.

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About the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America’s youth. The Center is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. More information on the Center and a full text of this report can be found at

www.camy.org.