



cmch

center on media and child health

Boston Children's Hospital
300 Longwood Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02115
phone 617-355-2000 | fax 617-730-0004 | www.cmch.tv
cmch@childrens.harvard.edu

 **Boston Children's Hospital**
One for every child's world

 **HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL**
TEACHING HOSPITAL

 **HARVARD**
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

28

Monday, April 7, 2014

RE: Policy Order Resolution O-1

Good evening Councillor McGovern, members of the Cambridge City Council, and the community of Cambridge. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jill R. Kavanaugh, and I am a Research Librarian at the Center on Media and Child Health at Boston Children's Hospital. I am here today representing the Center on Media and Child Health, to voice our support for this year's Screen-Free Week in Cambridge, from May 5th through May 11th, 2014.

At the Center on Media and Child Health, we are committed to educating researchers, clinicians, parents, teachers, and policy makers about the effects of media on youth - both positive and negative. The collective message throughout the large body of evidence is that content matters - teens who consume violent media in the form of movies and video games are more likely to be aggressive and desensitized to violence, whereas children who watch television shows with positive messages are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors.

Unfortunately, in a media-saturated world where youth are spending an average of 7 and a half hours per day in front of screen media, it is difficult to monitor and control what messages they encounter, and how these messages will affect them. At the Center, we have spent the last ten years collecting peer-reviewed research articles that examine the effects of media on youth. According to the substantial body of evidence, screen-media are one of the leading causes of a variety of negative health outcomes in youth, including obesity, eating disorders, risky sexual behaviors, substance use, media addiction, sleep disorders, and aggression. In an effort to help parents navigate the digital landscape, the Center's founder, pediatrician Dr. Michael Rich, tackles tough questions about parenting digital natives, and guides parents to teach critical media literacy skills to their youth in our Ask the Mediatrician Blog.

Our research, outreach, and position at Boston Children's Hospital are why we at the Center on Media and Child Health support Screen-Free Week: the evidence supports the idea of adopting a healthy balance between media-use and non-screen activities. Turning off screens for one week can emphasize the value of digital downtime, allowing youth time for free play, creative thought, and use of their imagination. Screen-Free Week is an opportunity for families to reconnect, while providing youth with the time and space they need to foster creativity.

In summary, I encourage the City of Cambridge to support Screen-Free Week. On behalf of the Center on Media and Child Health, I want to thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jill R. Kavanaugh