The Institute for American Values has announced that more than 120 mothers and their supporters, including leaders across the country and across the political spectrum, have released a report on advertising’s effects on children, calling upon advertisers to adopt a “Mothers’ Code” to protect children. The broad-based, nonpartisan group has declared itself, “in rebellion against a popular culture that is waging war on our children.”

The report, titled *Watch Out For Children: A Mothers’ Statement to Advertisers*, addresses one of the issues of greatest concern to mothers and fathers today: the increasingly powerful influence of advertising and marketing in shaping children’s values. The statement speaks directly to advertisers, charging that those who market products and services and sponsor media programs are increasingly causing harm to children, and calls upon advertisers to work with mothers and fathers to restore the boundaries that until recently protected childhood.

Calling them the “chief storytellers of our age,” *Watch Out For Children* admonishes advertisers for their “growing willingness to sacrifice the best interests of children for the sake of money,” and reminds them of the time-honored and commonsense principle that “all adults—from parents to business leaders—must watch what they do and say in front of children.”

The mothers’ statement calls upon advertisers to voluntarily endorse, as minimum standards, the following “Mothers’ Code”:

1) No advertising, marketing, or market research in schools, including high schools.
2) No targeting of advertising and marketing at children under the age of 8.
3) No product placement in movies and media programs targeted at children and adolescents.
4) No behavioral science research to develop advertising and marketing aimed at children and adolescents.
5) No advertising and marketing directed at children and adolescents that promote an ethic of selfishness and a focus on instant gratification.
6) Good faith efforts to reduce sponsorship of gratuitously sexual and/or violent programming likely to be watched by children.

Pointing to the growing body of evidence showing that advertisers are using the potent tools of the behavioral sciences to target and manipulate children at younger and younger ages in nearly every place that children can be found, the signatories observe that “for advertisers, our children are customers, and childhood is a market segment to be exploited.” The signatories warn that the values conveyed by advertising and marketing today—“that life is about selfishness, instant gratification, and materialism”—are values at odds with the values that mothers try to teach children, “values essential for civilized life.”

The signatories recognize a fundamental conflict between values of the money world and values of the “motherworld,” or “the values of commerce and the values required to raise healthy children.” They pledge to work to reassert their values in the lives of their children, to make their homes and schools commerce-free zones, to support companies that support them and to refuse to support companies that do not support them, to use their power as consumers and stockholders to safeguard children, and to work for public policies that adequately protect children.

The full text of *Watch Out for Children* can be read at www.rebelmothers.org. The site also contains all of the original signers of the statement as well as the opportunity for others to add their names to this statement.