

# Sens. Baldwin and Blumenthal: Call on Weight Watchers to remove dangerous dieting app targeted at young kids

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) wrote to the CEO of WW, formerly known as Weight Watchers, to call on the company to immediately pull Kurbo—its potentially harmful dieting app designed for children as young as eight years old—from the marketplace. Since the app was launched, numerous pediatric specialists and eating disorder experts have raised concerns that Kurbo’s poor implementation and design, such as the inclusion of before-and-after photos and a focus on weight reduction rather than nutrition, could put a child’s mental and physical health at risk.

*“Childhood obesity is a medical crisis in the United States, and it is imperative that pediatricians and medical professionals, including those with expertise on eating disorders, guide decisions parents and children and making about healthy eating habits. An app like Kurbo, in conjunction with this lack of relevant medical expertise, has the potential to contribute to eating disorders that plague children, adolescents, and adults across the country. Simply put, Kurbo has no place in the hands of children and we ask that you withdraw the app from the marketplace,”* **wrote the Senators.**

*“According to pediatricians and eating disorder experts, Kurbo’s design is filled with red flags,”* **wrote the Senators.** *“Unfortunately, Kurbo’s system lacks necessary medical support and oversight for children that could provide nutritional guidance,*

*tips on healthy habits overall, and properly discern, on a situation to situation basis, if it may or may not be appropriate for a child to be seeking to address his/her weight.”*

**The Senators warn that** *“Kurbo’s use of before-and-after photos, as well as the use of BMI and weight loss results tells children that they deserve to feel successful only if their BMI or weight drops, or if they look like the child Kurbo had featured, implying that their appearance and the number on the scale is more highly valued their health or character. This emphasis on losing weight directly contrasts expert advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in 2016 that parents should steer their children clear of dieting and avoid specific discussions on weight.”*

*“Eating disorders have the second highest mortality rate of any mental health condition,”* **the Senators note.** *“Unfortunately, adolescents who engage in dieting are five times more likely than their peers to develop an eating disorder, meaning that Kurbo’s consumers are at a particularly high risk.*

*“There is no question that childhood obesity is a devastating health issue, but WW has seemingly disregarded the medical advice of pediatricians and eating disorder experts, as well as the health of the millions of children who could be at risk of, or currently suffer from, an eating disorder. There are more responsible ways to address the childhood obesity epidemic that do not expose children to so much potential harm. A child’s confidence, mental and physical health, and lifelong relationship with food is invaluable,”* **wrote the Senators.**

The full letter is available [here](#). An online version of this release is available [here](#).