

Education Committee
March 17, 2014
John Bailey, Government Relations Director
American Heart Association



Support for H.B. 5566: *An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes*

Good morning Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is John Bailey, State Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association, and I ask you to support H.B. 5566: An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes, specifically Sec. 8. Subsection (a).

The U.S. is in the midst of a full-blown obesity epidemic and, this public health crisis includes children. Currently, one third of children are overweight or obese. The health consequences of obesity in children are staggering. Recent research shows that an obese child's arteries resemble those of a middle-aged adult and overweight adolescents have an overwhelming chance of becoming obese adults. These children are being sentenced to an early future of cardiovascular disease, disability, and possible death.

Schools need to be part of the solution by establishing a foundation for a lifetime of healthy behaviors in the next generation of children. One way schools can do this is ensuring that the school environment promotes healthy eating habits. In December 2010, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act became law, giving the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) the authority to update national nutrition standards for school meals and establish nutrition standards for other foods, called competitive foods, sold on school campuses throughout the school day.

H.B. 5566 makes the appropriate changes in Sec. 8. Subsection (a) to ensure students in the state's schools have access to beverages with the highest nutritional standards. It is essential to make sure that all beverages available in schools are healthy and follow the U.S. Department of Agriculture's school nutrition standards. Even if students eat a healthy lunch, research shows they often still consume excess calories from a la carte items their cafeteria might serve. That's why clearly defining the nutritional standards for milks and setting the standards for healthier beverage options is critical for improving children's diets and reversing the childhood obesity epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Bailey II".

John M. Bailey II
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