

**Testimony of Theresa Velenzas Before the Connecticut General Assembly of  
Public Health Committee  
March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015**

Good Morning Chairs, co-Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and Honorable Members of the Children's Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting HB 6898 An Act Concerning the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods in School.

I was just made aware of this bill and am thrilled to even have an hour to show my support. As a mother of two children (aged 4 & 7) who has testified before your committee on other matters, I am again glad to see your committee working on yet another worthwhile cause.

Over the past year and a half I have worked with another mom Taryn Narrow and have successfully removed Artificial Dyes from our school district in Glastonbury. During the course of our project with the Glastonbury Board of Education we posted a petition that in just a few days received such overwhelming support (1221 signatures), we didn't even need to keep promoting it. Now there are several similar petitions across the nation with thousands more supporters. This is one small step on our part in a larger nationwide trend towards ensuring our children are offered healthful choices in school menus. The simple reason is that unhealthy choices pose a barrier to learning.

This is scientifically proven in numerous studies. I would never start my child's day with a sugar loaded cinnamon swirl doughnut and then expect them to sit quietly for classroom instruction. It doesn't make sense to have marketing materials from Dunkin Donuts displayed in a school, either. McDonald's works a lot with schools and sends freebies like napkins and cups, supplies to advertise their food. When the school accepts these, it sends a contradictory message to my children; that even though mommy says McDonald's isn't healthy, the school endorses it.

Soda machines in teacher lounges benefit directly from marketing. As we know, soda is not served to students, yet that message is watered down when the teachers are seen drinking Coca Cola during school.

It is well established that sugar and artificial dyes pose a barrier to learning. In a learning environment, it makes good sense to remove those barriers and ensure a consistent message. Processed food advertisements are everywhere. They don't belong in our schools.

If you have any question as to whether constituents support this effort, please be assured there are many petitions with similar causes online. I only wish we had more than an hour to get the word out about this bill. If there's anything I can do please email me and I will be honored to support this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and be of assistance.

Sincerely,

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