



March 11, 2015

Testimony in favor of

HB05526 AN ACT EXPANDING HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES ON STATE PROPERTY AND IN STATE-SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONS.

Good day Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger advocacy, education and outreach organization. I am a member of the CT Coalition Against Childhood Obesity. I am here in support of HB 5526, An Act Expanding Healthy Food Choices on State Property and In State-Supported Institutions.

In 2013 the obesity rate in Connecticut was 25%, up from 18.9% in 2004 and from 10.4 in 1990. Our children range from 15.8% (2-4 year olds), 15% (10-17 year olds) and 12.3% (high school students). Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, arthritis and obesity related cancers are outcomes of obesity and are expected to increase significantly by 2030 unless something is done.¹

Despite all we do to teach our children and everyone else good nutrition, it means nothing if healthier choices are not available where people congregate. I've attached three pictures that I took last fall at one of our state agency buildings, outside of the conference rooms. I was amazed to see that there really were no healthy food choices, and out of two coolers there was only one row at the very bottom of water, while energy drinks and other flavored waters at eye level. In the vending machines in the Capitol there is only one choice for water out of the 12 or so slots.

The World Health Organization suggest that

The food industry can play a significant role in promoting healthy diets by:

- *reducing the fat, sugar and salt content of processed foods;*
- *ensuring that healthy and nutritious choices are available and affordable to all consumers;*
- *practicing responsible marketing especially those aimed at children and teenagers;*
- ***ensuring the availability of healthy food choices and supporting regular physical activity practice in the workplace.***² (emphasis mine)

¹ State of Obesity: A project of the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Stateofobesity.org/states/ct

² World Health Organization, Obesity and Overweight Fact Sheet No. 311, updated January 2015,

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs311/en/>

According to a survey by the Snack Food Association³ 81% of Americans hope to avoid costly medical bills by eating foods that are healthful, 74% of consumers are trying to eat healthier, 65% are eating specific foods to lose weight, and healthier snack sales growth is outpacing traditional snack sales growth. People want healthier choices and there is money to be made in offering to them.

This bill reflects that consumer tastes are changing and vending and food –service businesses need to keep pace. We learned with passage of the school nutrition bill in Connecticut in 2006 that changes to nutrition standards positively affect the quality of food offered and influence the practices of food companies in formulating products that are healthier. Revenue will not be hurt as healthier options are available and in fact may increase as more people request healthier foods.

Beyond this, it is good public policy. Obesity related diseases incur huge medical cost to the state and obesity and overweight affect our employees and employers with increased absenteeism, poor working ability, and low self-esteem are some of the outcomes. People want healthier foods and the state, with its ability to influence what foods are available, would do well to pass this legislation. Any cost to the state will be seen through the increased health of our residents.

I urge passage of HB5526, An Act Expanding Healthy Food Choices on State Property and In State-Supported Institutions.

Thank you.

See attached pictures

³ Wyatt SL. State of the Snack Food Industry 2010. PowerPoint Presentation, 2011

