Support for Senate Bill 35 Beverages with Added Sugars, Sweeteners, and Artificial Sweeteners, and Obesity

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee,

I am Mary Moran Boudreau with the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative and I am writing in support of SB 35, an act concerning beverages with added sugars, sweeteners and artificial sweeteners, and obesity. There is solid scientific evidence that the consumption of sugary drinks contributes to a number of serious, chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Sugary drink consumption contributes significantly to another serious, chronic disease: dental decay. The sugar in these drinks--soda, sports drinks, sweet teas, energy drinks and sweetened waters--combines with bacteria to form acid, which attack the teeth and erode the enamel.

Here’s what else we know about sugary drinks and dental disease:

- Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, as well as the presence of bacteria, are significant predictors of early childhood caries (the disease of tooth decay) in high-risk, low socio-economic status populations.
- Children who consume more soft drinks, relative to milk and 100 percent fruit juice, are at a greater risk of developing dental caries as they grow older.
- A 2006 study showed that the most frequently consumed food item by adults of all ages was soft drinks. Frequency of soft drink consumption and the presence of gingival plaque deposits were significantly associated with caries.

Sugary drinks are the single largest source of added sugars in our diets today. Educating consumers about the hazards of consuming these junk drinks is important, but not sufficient. As you know, sugar-sweetened beverage taxes are being implemented in several U.S. cities, including Berkeley, San Francisco, Oakland, and Albany California, as well as Philadelphia and Chicago. The taxes are reducing consumption, just as tobacco taxes did. A study on the impact in Berkeley showed that after five months, a penny-per-ounce tax caused consumption to fall by 21%, with water consumption increasing by 63%. A study of Mexico’s tax showed a decrease of 9% in sugary drink purchases.

A Connecticut sugary drink tax would make us the U.S. leader, setting an example for other states to follow, so that nationally we can begin to make a dent in the high rates of dental disease and other serious diseases.

Good oral health is essential to staying healthy. I urge you to support this very important measure to help our citizens reduce the consumption of these unhealthful drinks. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,
Mary Moran Boudreau
Executive Director

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