I would like to thank the Finance committee leadership and members for providing me with the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 7312 An Act Concerning A Tax On Certain Sweetened Beverages, on behalf of A Pinch of Salt, LLC.

As a chef instructor, I provide cooking education and workshops in my neighborhood of Bridgeport. In food pantries, community meal sites, the YMCA, LifeBridge and Hall Neighborhood House, I teach people of all ages how to easily incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables in their diet. With these new culinary skills, they are aware of how to best work with these ingredients. Being on the ground working in the communities of Bridgeport and surrounding areas I see the impact of having convenience stores and clusters of fast-food establishments, mostly in low-income areas where there is little access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

We all know the effects of childhood obesity, in areas like Bridgeport these children are normally defeated before they have an opportunity to understand the importance of eating a well-balanced diet or are old enough to make these eating decisions at home or financially contribute to making it a part of their lifestyle. While some may argue that it is the responsibility of the parent to instill these eating habits, often these parents are victims of this vicious cycle and hence the opportunity to break free has not yet presented itself in a way that empowers them to change the future generations on their own.

Implementing a Sugar Tax may not be a final solution to this problem, but it is the first step in the right direction. Imposing a Tax on certain Sweetened Beverages itself provides both a financial and health statement that may cause a consumer to choose water or a less sugary alternative when purchasing beverages. The result of a different choice could keep sugary beverages from being passed on to other family members in the home. This alone is enough of reason to receive my support.

Sincerely,

Raquel Rivera-Pablo

Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo

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