



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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S.B. 88, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENUS
Committee on Children
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Senator Moore, Representative Linehan and members of the Children Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 21 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut. I'm here today to urge the members of this committee to support S.B. 88, An Act Concerning Children's Menus.

The bill requires a restaurant that sells a combination of food items and a beverage, sold together at a single price, and primarily intended for consumption by children, to make the default beverage offered with the meal a healthful option.

This bill does not ban the sale of soda!

A sugary drink can still be provided with a children's meal at no additional cost, but the customer must explicitly ask to replace the healthful drink with a sugary beverage.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is keenly aware of the staggering rates of childhood obesity rates in Connecticut. Thirty-three percent of the children in Connecticut are obese or overweight. This is not just a problem, this is an epidemic. I would suggest that if thirty-three percent of the children in our state were impacted by some type of disease, the Connecticut General Assembly would rise to the occasion to try to solve this problem.

Sugary beverages are a top source of calories in children's diets and do not typically provide any positive nutritional value. Drinking just one sugary drink a day increases a child's likelihood of being overweight by 55 percent.

S.B. 88 will improve children's health by setting nutrition beverage standards for children's meals served in Connecticut.

Childhood obesity impacts a child's long-term health and performance in the classroom. It can also have a lifelong psychological effect on a child.

The direct measurement of height and weight in an Every Smile Counts Obesity Survey from 2012 revealed that almost one-third (31.7%) of Connecticut students in kindergarten and 3rd grade are overweight or obese.

Dr. Rebeca London from Stanford University stated it's been established that there's a link between students' obesity or physical fitness and academic achievement.

According to a 2015 research study that was published in *Pediatric Obesity*, children who are overweight or obese are frequently victimized by peers and being overweight is one of the most prevalent reasons for peer harassment reported by youth. We are all aware regarding the long term impact of bullying.

According to the Connecticut Department of Health, overweight children and adolescents are at risk for many serious physical, social and mental health problems – both during their youth and as adults.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs understands the need to develop more comprehensive anti-obesity strategies that go beyond simply imposing a ban on certain beverages and requiring exercise, but this is a start in the right direction. We believe it's very clear that if we want our children to become productive adults in our society, we must continue to address the childhood obesity epidemic.