



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
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Testimony Re: H 5427, Healthy Beverages Act
House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare
March 6, 2019
Devan Quinn, Policy Analyst

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports House bill 5427 which would require restaurants to provide an option of a healthy beverage in any children's meal that includes a beverage.

This bill would provide a healthier beverage option in children's meals when dining at restaurants and fast food locations. Many restaurants and fast food locations already do provide healthier options but this bill would make sure parents *always* have the option to provide more nutritious choices for their children.

Childhood Obesity in Rhode Island

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will be releasing statewide clinical childhood BMI data later this month, but we may look to other clinical childhood BMI data sets to understand the severity of childhood overweight and obesity. A 2017 analysis of Providence Community Health Center patients under 18 found that 25% of children were obese and 19% were overweight.¹

Sugar Sweetened Beverages Linked to Weight Gain and Obesity Among Children

Sugar sweetened beverages, particularly carbonated soft drinks and juices with added sugar, are a key contributor to the childhood obesity epidemic.² Nearly 40% of energy consumed by children ages 2 to 18 come from empty calories, mostly from soda, fruit drinks, deserts, and pizza.³ Overweight children are at increased risk for serious health problems in adulthood, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma, and cancer.⁴

Restaurants Play Large Role in Children's Food Consumption

Children and families are consuming more of their meals at fast food and at restaurants and studies show that parents lack awareness and confidence in the amount of calories in restaurant meals.⁵

The General Assembly has a long history of supporting the health and well-being of children and supporting parents to make good choices for their children. **We urge you to support this bill and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.**

References

- ¹ Brown University Institute for Community Health Promotion analysis of BMI electronic medical records values of active children receiving care at Providence Community Health Centers, 2014-2015 to 2016-2017.
- ² Malik, V. S., Schulze, M. B., Hu, F. B. (2006). Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 84(2):274-288.
- ³ Reedy, J., Krebs-Smith, S. M. (2010). Dietary sources of energy, solid fats, and added sugars among children and adolescents in the United States. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 110:1477-1484.
- ⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. Rockville, MD: Office of the Surgeon General.
- ⁵ Lynskey, V. M, et al. (2017). Low parental awareness about energy (calorie) recommendations for children's restaurant meals: Findings from a national survey in the USA. *Public Health Nutrition*, 20(11).