

Philadelphians for a FAIR FUTURE

Coalition Statements on Passage of the Soda Tax

Philadelphia, June 17, 2016 – In the wake of City Council’s historic vote Thursday to adopt a sweetened beverages tax to pay for critical new education programs and neighborhood revitalization programs citywide, here are statements from some of the 81 partners who comprise Philadelphians for a Fair Future:

- American Heart Association: From Kenneth B. Margulies, M.D., President, American Heart Association Southeaster PA Board of Directors

“The American Heart Association (AHA) commends the Philadelphia City Council on the passage of the sugary drink tax to fund much needed programs such as citywide Pre-K, community schools, and investments in parks and recreation facilities. Philadelphia became the first major U.S. city to approve a tax on sugary and diet drinks. The AHA believes the tax has the potential to positively impact public health by reducing consumption of unhealthy sugary beverages, in addition to raising revenue for education and health programs.

“In Philadelphia, excess consumption of sweetened beverages is fueling chronic diseases across our community. We are setting a trend for other cities to bring in revenue and turn the tide on heart disease and diabetes,” said Kenneth B. Margulies, M.D., president, AHA Southeastern Pennsylvania Board of Directors.

“The single largest source of added sugar in the American diet is sugary drinks. Almost one-third of children and adolescents ages 2 to 19 in the U.S. are overweight. Of those who are overweight, more than 17% are estimated to be obese, which puts them at an increased risk of developing chronic diseases. The AHA recommends limiting consumption of sugary beverages and added sugar to no more than 450 calories (36 oz.) per week.

“The AHA led a grassroots effort to support the passage of the sugary beverage tax. Today’s vote has gained national attention as more cities and states consider sugary drink taxes as an effective strategy to fund needed programs and impact public health. The AHA supports the tax as a tool which has the potential to quickly reduce consumption of unhealthy sugary beverages.”

- CEIBA: From Will Gonzalez, Executive Director

“Ceiba expresses its most sincere Gracias to Mayor Kenney, City Council President Clarke, and the members of City Council for passing the Soda Tax: historic legislation that addresses, with one act, various critical issues confronting poor neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

“The Latino community has the highest poverty rate in Philadelphia and looks forward to helping the City to maximize the positive impact that the additional revenue generated by the Soda Tax will have on:

- Increasing the number of children in Pre-K programs,
- Improving neighborhood recreation centers and libraries, and
- Enhancing schools by making them true Community Schools

“We also congratulate Philadelphia's government leadership for passing Bill 160552, - a tax credit to encourage certain merchants to provide healthy beverage alternatives in their stores. This tax credit together with the Soda Tax will increase the availability and diversity of non-sugary products at corner stores and this will save lives and reduce health care expenses in the Latino community; one of the populations most affected by Diabetes and the obesity crisis.

“Gracias for aiming to kick off the new fiscal year right.

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“Ceiba felicita al Alcalde Kenney, el Presidente del Concejo Municipal Darrell Clarke, y los demás miembros de la legislatura de la ciudad de Filadelfia por su aprobación del 'Sugar Tax' una ley que busca resolver, de un golpe, varios retos serios que los pobres confrontan en esta ciudad.

“La comunidad Latina sufre de los índices más altos de pobreza en Filadelfia y está ansiosa de ayudar al gobierno municipal a agigantar los impactos positivos de economía y ambiente que los ingresos presupuestarios adicionales generados por el 'Soda Tax' tendrá cuando se utilicen para:

- Aumentar el número de cupos de pre kindergarten;
- Arreglar los centros de recreo; y
- Transformar a las escuelas a centros de servicios sociales para la comunidad

“También queremos felicitar al liderazgo político de Filadelfia por su aprobación de otra medida (Bill 160552) que ofrece un crédito tributario a comerciantes que buscan aumentar la diversificación de las bebidas disponibles para la venta en las bodegas y así aumentar los tipos de productos saludables y sin azúcar que se venden en las tiendas de nuestros barrios.

“Las dos normas en conjunto salvaran muchas vidas y le ahorrara a nuestras familias mucho dinero en gastos médicos ya que la comunidad Latina sufre de las tasas más altas de Diabetes y nuestros vecindarios son epicentros de la crisis de obesidad que azota a nuestro país.

“Gracias por comenzar el nuevo año fiscal con buen pie.”

- The Food Trust: From Yael Lehmann, Executive Director

“The Philadelphia soda tax will not only be a means to pay for universal pre-K, an investment in our children which could help lift an entire generation out of poverty, but is also part of a comprehensive strategy to curb the consumption of sugary drinks, ultimately helping reverse our city’s obesity and diabetes epidemic. Mayor Kenney and City Council should be applauded for taking this bold step to improve the health and well-being of Philadelphians, especially our children.

“With the passing of this tax, Philadelphia is on the front lines in the battle against urban poverty and diet-related disease - and the rest of the nation is watching. Since we have their attention, it should be noted that the soda tax will serve as a part of a comprehensive approach to decrease the consumption of soda and increase access and consumption of water. Here are some other important elements of that approach:

- In addition to the passage of the soda tax, City Council has also approved a new measure to create a tax credit of up to \$2,000 for merchants who sell healthy beverages in their stores, which will incentivize small business owners to move toward selling healthier options.
- Since 2004, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, a partnership between the Philadelphia Department of Health and The Food Trust, has helped increase the offering of healthy foods and beverages in over 450 corner stores throughout the city.
- Also in 2004, Philadelphia became the second major U.S. school district to end the sale of carbonated sodas in all school vending machines.
- For over a decade, Nutrition Educators from The Food Trust and other organizations have been working in schools to teach students about the hazards of sugary drinks as well as encourage students to make healthier choices and consume more water.
- In 2014, Philadelphia was the first to launch a city-wide effort under the Partnership for a Healthier America’s Drink Up campaign. Drink Up Philly has partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department, the Philadelphia 76ers, corner

store operators and other non-profit partners to encourage people to drink more water, more often.

- The School District of Philadelphia has recently committed \$1,000,000 to ensure three hydration stations per school. The School District has also developed a plan to increase drinking water access and appeal, which includes testing and outreach. Youth United for Change and Get HYPE Philly!'s Youth Leadership Council are also advocating for school wellness policies that allow students to carry refillable water bottles, and more.
- This fall, City Council will be voting on legislation calling to increase the number of working fountains to 1 per every 100 students, as well as efforts to ensure the quality and safety of school water in schools and daycare centers.

“Philadelphia has a long history of collaboration between government, nonprofits, business and community partners to improve health and local economies. With such outstanding efforts, Philadelphia continues to be a national leader in public health. We would like to thank Mayor Kenney, City Council and all of the partner advocates who are working to dramatically change the lives of our children and make Philadelphia a healthier place for all.”

- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance: From Maud Lyon, President

“On Thursday, June 16, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance joined supporters of education, parks, rec centers and libraries in applauding City Council’s 13-4 vote in favor of the Sugary Beverage Tax.

“Arts advocates throughout the city have strongly supported this effort, with more than 100 people reaching out to City Council members via the Alliance’s GroundSwell advocacy and community engagement program during the final 48 hours before the vote.

“We congratulate City Council on working with the Mayor’s administration to pass a Sugary Beverage Tax that will invest in high-quality pre-K education, parks, rec centers, and libraries.

“Thanks to the City’s efforts, thousands of children, families and neighborhoods will benefit. This also presents expanded opportunities for high-impact arts and culture programming throughout the city. As a proud member of the Philadelphians for a Fair Future Coalition, the Cultural Alliance has supported the Sugary Beverage Tax, and we would like to also thank our arts advocates who saw the importance and potential of the Mayor’s proposal, and encouraged their Council members to vote in favor of the tax.”

“This endorsement is part of the Alliance’s effort to integrate arts and culture in more City initiatives. The Alliance will continue to work closely with City Council and the Kenney administration to expand access to arts and culture throughout the city through these improvements.”

- Healthy Food America: From Jim Krieger, Executive Director

SEATTLE, WA – The Philadelphia City Council just approved the second and largest tax on sweetened drinks in the U.S., by a vote of 13-4. Dr. Jim Krieger, executive director of Healthy Food America, issued this statement in response:

“The bold action by Philadelphia’s mayor and city council, in the face of \$5 million worth of industry pressure, is a win not just for the health and well-being of Philadelphia kids but for communities across the country.

“The move to recapture a sliver of profits from an industry that pushes a product that contributes to diabetes, obesity and heart disease in poorer communities in order to reinvest in those communities is sure to be inspirational to many other places. Indeed, we are already hearing from some of them. It’s not ‘just Berkeley’ anymore.

“We commend and congratulate Mayor Jim Kenney and the courageous members of the City Council for their vision and fortitude.”

- Philadelphia Federation of Teachers: From PFT President Jerry Jordan

"Council's decisive passage of the soda tax today is another indication that they are, above all else, here to fight for the programs our children and communities so richly deserve.

"We cannot overstate the value of quality early childhood education. Children who have access to pre-k programs not only perform better in grades K-12, but are also more likely to attend college, and less likely to fall victim to the school-to-prison pipeline.

"PFT members have been at the forefront of talking with our elected officials and the public about the benefits of pre-K and community schools. In May and June, more than 200 info pickets were held at more than 100 schools city-wide. Educators used these sessions to provide information to the community, encourage parents to engage with elected officials, and emphasize the significance of the programs that our children deserve.

"The PFT has been in favor of Mayor Kenney's sugary drink proposal since its inception, and never doubted that the end result of discussion and debates within City Council would result in a measure that makes great progress towards funding essential programs.

"Under the leadership of Council President Darrell Clarke, City Council has once again taken time to vet, debate, and come to consensus around legislation that will undoubtedly result in significant and tangible results for children and communities.

"The fact that the city is coalescing around educational initiatives promoted for years by the PFT is a testament to the work that our members do every day, both in and out of the classroom. "We look forward to engaging with Council and the Mayor to ensure the implementation of Pre-K and Community Schools is as effective as possible."

• Philadelphia Parks Alliance: From George Matysik, Executive Director

"The Parks Alliance offers the following statement in response to the historic vote today in Philadelphia City Council adopting the sweetened beverages tax:

"For thousands of Philadelphians, the face of City government is what they see in recreation centers, parks and libraries. Today's historic vote will provide the opportunity for the City to revitalize these facilities, many of which are more than 50 years old and in urgent need of repair.

"We congratulate Mayor Kenney and the members of City Council for their leadership in making it possible at long last to restore these facilities as the centers of the neighborhoods they serve. Our fellow citizens deserve no less."

• Public Citizens for Children and Youth: From Donna Cooper, Executive Director:

"This victory is a watershed moment for health advocates across the country. It's a boost for other cities hoping to follow Philadelphia's lead. But the biggest winners today are the generations of children whose destinies will be changed because they'll be attending quality pre-k, grow up playing in revamped public spaces or live in a neighborhood with a community school. Philadelphians have a lot to be proud of today, especially their new Mayor and City Council."

- SEIU 32BJ: From Gabe Morgan, Vice President of 32BJ SEIU

"In a city where luxury condos are popping up everywhere, it is shameful that we are still the #1 big city for poverty in the nation. As Philly becomes a world class destination, most of its residents still struggle to pay their bills and give their children a good education. The only way we end Philadelphia's tale of two cities is to invest in good jobs and good schools. The soda tax make a critical investment in early childhood education and will put Philadelphians to work rebuilding rec centers and infrastructure. We commend City Council and Mayor Kenney for taking this important step in investing in our city, and our children's future."

- Sustainable Business Network: From Jamie Gauthier, Executive Director:

The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia strongly applauds Philadelphia City Council's historic vote to improve education, quality of life in neighborhoods, and ultimately the health of our local economy, by overwhelmingly adopting a new tax on sweetened beverages.

SBN has been a strong and vocal supporter of this tax over the past few months because our members understand that for businesses to thrive, people and neighborhoods must thrive, too. For our 400 small business members, it has long been clear that strong local economies are undergirded by strong infrastructure, vibrant communities, and empowered human capital.

The proceeds from the sweetened beverage tax will allow Philadelphia to invest much-needed resources in universal pre-K, the creation of 25 new community schools, and the revitalization of scores of neighborhood recreation centers, parks and libraries. In our view, these are all critical interventions in Philadelphia's economic health, because:

Philadelphia's economy will be at its strongest when we lift 400,000 of our residents out of poverty.

Philadelphia's workforce will effectively compete when our schools graduate young people with the skills that our local businesses need to thrive.

And Philadelphia's business districts will rebound more quickly when we make investments in neighborhood infrastructure like parks and recreation centers.

We are gratified that our businesses answered the call to support bold investments in the quality of life of all Philadelphia's citizens. In the face of the considerable and well-resourced corporate lobby standing in opposition, local small businesses in the

Sustainable Business Network, together with neighborhood, civic, labor, faith, parks advocates, and everyday people from across the city stood firmly in support of the Philadelphia we are close to building together— one that includes universal pre-k, community schools, and safe spaces for our children to play and recreate.

SBN congratulates Mayor Kenney, Council President Clarke and the members of City Council, our partners in the Philadelphians for a Fair Future coalition, and most importantly, Philadelphia's children and families on this momentous advance towards a more just and sustainable local economy in Philadelphia.

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