

Philadelphians for a FAIR FUTURE

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SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK JOINS COALITION IN SUPPORT OF SUGARY DRINKS TAX

Regional network of more than 400 businesses urges action now on Mayor's budget proposal

Philadelphia, May 10, 2016 – The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, representing more than 400 businesses throughout the city and region, today announced that it is joining Philadelphians for a Fair Future, the coalition of 63 organizations urging passage of the Sugary Drinks Tax.

In a letter to its members, the SBN concluded that the proposed levy “is the best way to fund programs that will support a smart growth agenda for our local economy.”

“SBN supports this tax because we support sustainable communities that offer opportunity for all,” said Jamie Gauthier, SBN’s Executive Director. “Philadelphia has the highest level of deep poverty of any major city in America, and the Mayor’s proposed investments in education and our neighborhoods provide the best opportunity to break that cycle for hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens.”

“In the end, the tax is the best way to pay for programs that will help our kids,” Gauthier said, “and what’s good for children is good for business in Philadelphia.”

SBN rejects the notion that the tax is regressive, as critics have claimed. “[F]ew things are more regressive for our city . . . than a lack of quality educational options in the face of deep poverty,” SBN told its members in the letter. “And few things are more regressive for our city than crumbling community infrastructure, too-few safe spaces to recreate, and too-high energy bills that steal away the hard-earned income of working families.”

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Gauthier said that SBN also takes issue with those seeking an alternative tax option to pay for the Mayor's proposed investments in pre-K, community schools, and parks, rec centers and libraries.

"The idea that it's better to fund these proposals by freezing planned reductions in wage and BIRT taxes is just wrong on the facts," she said. "Academic studies and local task forces have repeatedly documented the job losses Philadelphia has suffered because of the City's high personal and business taxes. Freezing or raising business and personal wage taxes across the board would take Philadelphia's economy in the wrong direction, and in the case of the wage tax, would disproportionately target Philadelphia's low wage workers. That would truly be regressive.

The soda tax is the best way to fund programs that our children and our neighborhoods need right now," Gauthier said. "We enthusiastically support this effort, and we will work hard to achieve its passage."

SBN's announcement was happily accepted by PFF, which has been advocating in support of the Mayor's proposals and the tax as the best way to pay for them.

"SBN's members have given the issue careful analysis and have come to the same conclusion as tens of thousands of Philadelphians all across the city," said PFF spokesman Kevin Feeley. "If we are serious about fighting poverty in our city, now is the time to support programs that will make a difference. We thank SBN for its support."

About PFF

The Coalition includes 63 partners whose members represent all walks of life in Philadelphia, including: Public Citizens for Children and Youth; the Philadelphia Parks Alliance; the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers; the Service Employees International Union; ministers and religious leaders from several different faiths, including Minister Rodney Muhammad, President of the Philadelphia NAACP; the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children; Aspira; Action United; the Center for Science in the Public Interest; Lodge 5 of the FOP; Local 22, IAFF; District Councils 33 and 47, AFSCME; Universal Companies; and multiple small business owners from throughout the city.

The Coalition's activities focus on raising public awareness about the importance of the Mayor's budget investments and the need to enact the Sugary Drinks tax as the only fair way to pay for them. The Coalition will lead a variety of public engagement activities to educate citizens, including public rallies, meetings and other events, as well as grassroots organizing to rally support for the program. Additionally, PFF corrects misinformation about the tax generated by its opponents.

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