

February 25, 2019

Councilmember Mark Levine
Chair, Committee on Health
New York City Council
City Hall Park
New York, NY 10007

Re: Int 1326-2019 – Requiring added sugar notifications on menu boards and signs.

Dear Chairman Levine and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of Council Bill 1326-2019. The bill would allow millions of New Yorkers to make more informed decisions about their own health by providing information on menus about the added sugars that are often hidden in restaurant foods and beverages.

CSPI is a nonprofit organization supported by our 550,000 members, including more than 7,000 in New York City. Since 1971, we have advocated for nutrition and food safety policies to make it easier for people to eat healthfully so they can avoid heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, and other diet- and obesity-related diseases.

Nationally, two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and in New York City more than half of adults' weight puts their health at risk.¹ Excess weight increases the risk for preventable diseases like diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.²

Added sugars, especially those from sugary beverages, snacks, and sweets, are a common source of extra calories in Americans' diets. Beverages such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened coffee and tea, energy drinks, alcoholic beverages, and flavored waters account for nearly half (47%) of all added sugars consumed.³ Other top sources of added sugars include grain-based desserts (such as cakes, pies, cookies, brownies, doughnuts, sweet rolls, and pastries) and ice cream and other frozen desserts.⁴ Excessive added sugar intake is linked to a higher risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and tooth decay.⁵ In addition, the updated Nutrition Facts label includes a line for added sugars on packaged and processed foods, as well as a percentage daily value of 50g of added sugars per day, or no more than 10% of calories out of a 2,000 calorie diet. This recommendation is based on, and consistent with, the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

We have long supported restaurant nutritional labeling as a means of raising consumer awareness and encouraging reformulation of offerings. Sugar-sweetened beverages, sweet baked goods, and ice cream are common restaurant menu offerings. Restaurants provide a third of Americans'

calories,⁶ and studies link eating out with higher caloric intake and obesity.⁷ For example, children typically eat more than twice (55%) as many calories when they eat a meal at a restaurant compared to a meal at home.⁸

Many studies show that providing nutrition information at restaurants can help people make lower calorie choices and spur the reformulation of existing food items and the introduction of nutritionally improved items. A 2018 review of nearly 30 studies from the well-respected Cochrane Collaboration concluded that menu labeling helps people reduce their calories by about 50 calories per meal, on average.⁹ Notifying consumers of menu items that are high in added sugars is one effective, low-cost way to support healthy eating and help to address obesity.

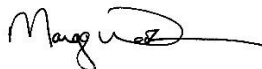
This bill would make it easier for millions of New Yorkers to make informed decisions about their own health. It would help consumers to reduce their added sugar intake to levels consistent with recommendations to improve their health and reduce their risk of costly and debilitating diseases.

Modeled after New York City's pioneering sodium warning label adopted by the Board of Health in 2015, the bill would make New York City the first in the nation to provide clear information to consumers on menus about the added sugars often hidden in foods and beverages at restaurants.

New York City was first to eliminate artificial trans fat and to label calories on chain restaurant menus—policies that have now been implemented nationwide. With this new proposal, New York City would once again be at the forefront when it comes to informing consumers and creating an incentive for restaurants to improve their products.

We urge the City Council to enact this legislation. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Margo G. Wootan, DSc
Vice President for Nutrition

¹ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. *Obesity*. New York City: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2019. Accessed at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/obesity.page>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans 8th Edition*. Washington, DC; USDA and HHS, 2015. Accessed at https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf.

³ HHS and USDA, 2015.

⁴ McGuire S, Todd JE, Mancino L, Lin B-H. The impact of food away from home on adult diet quality. *Adv Nutr*. 2011;2(5):442-443.

⁵ HHS and USDA, 2015.

⁶ McGuire, 2011.

⁷ Center for Science in the Public Interest. *Research Review: Effects of Eating Out on Nutrition and Body Weight*. October 2008. Accessed at http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/lit_rev-eating_out_and_obesity.pdf.

⁸ Zoumas-Morse C, et al. Children's patterns of macronutrient intake and associations with restaurant and home eating. *J Am Dietetic Assoc*. 2001;101: 923-925.

⁹ Crockett RA, et al. Nutritional labelling for healthier food or non-alcoholic drink purchasing and consumption. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. 2018, Issue 2.