

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT FOR A 2320-B and S 6435 ***Warning Labels on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages***

DATE: February 18, 2016

TO: NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND SENATORS

The undersigned scientists and researchers strongly support Assembly Bill 2320-B (Dinowitz) and Senate Bill S 6435 (Rivera), which would require warning labels on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). New York consumers have a right to know about the chronic health risks associated with soda and other sugary drink consumption. These bills represent a common sense, educational approach that would provide that vital evidence-based information to consumers.

The warning label would state: "SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes and tooth decay."

This warning, in fact, follows the recommendations and science of the recently released Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 that calls for limiting sugary drink consumption if they are consumed at all.¹ The Dietary Guidelines calls for Americans to consume no more than the equivalent of 12 teaspoons of added sugar daily*—a 12-ounce SSB contains generally around 10 teaspoons.

The Dietary Guidelines points to the scientific evidence that reducing consumption of added sugars reduces the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, as well as some cancers and heart disease.² In fact, sugary drinks are the single largest source of added sugars in the American diet, accounting for 47 percent.³ Each extra soft drink consumed per day is associated with a 60 percent increased risk of overweight in children.⁴

Moreover, research shows that a sugary drink warning label can be effective. A recently released study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that parents who saw a sugary drink warning label were 20 percent less likely to buy a sugary drink for their child.⁵

Although by no means a cure for our type 2 diabetes and obesity epidemics, warning labels are a time-tested public health intervention and have been effectively used to raise public awareness of the hazards of tobacco use and the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages. Research has found that warning labels on tobacco products effectively informed smokers about the health hazards of smoking, encouraged smokers to quit, and prevented nonsmokers from starting to smoke.⁶

New York State is plagued by declining health associated with poor eating and drinking habits. Six out of ten New York adults and one-third of our students are considered overweight or obese.^{7,8} Obesity-related state medical expenses are estimated at more than \$11.8 billion yearly.⁹

A 2320-B and S 6435 would educate the public on the health risks of sugary drinks and help encourage consumers to make healthier beverage choices. We urge the Assembly and the Senate to pass these important measures.

* The 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults consume less than 10% of calories from added sugar. Calculated based on a 2,000-calorie diet: 10% of 2,000 calories = 200 calories; 200 calories/4 calories per gram of sugar = 50 grams of sugar; 50 grams of sugar/4.2 grams per teaspoon of sugar = 12 teaspoons sugar (rounded).

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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015) 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. Chapter 2: Shifts Needed to Align with Healthy Eating Patterns, A Closer Look at Current Intakes and Recommended Shifts. Available at: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-2/a-closer-look-at-current-intakes-and-recommended-shifts/>

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015) 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. Chapter 1. Key Elements of Healthy Eating Patterns, A Closer Look Inside Healthy Eating Patterns. Available at: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-1/a-closer-look-inside-healthy-eating-patterns/>

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015) 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. Chapter 2: Shifts Needed to Align with Healthy Eating Patterns, A Closer Look at Current Intakes and Recommended Shifts; Figure 2-10. Available at: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-2/a-closer-look-at-current-intakes-and-recommended-shifts/>

⁴ Ludwig, D.S., Peterson, K.E., & Gortmaker, S.L. (2001). Relation between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: A prospective, observational analysis. *The Lancet*, 357(9255), 505-508.

⁵ Roberto, C.A., Wong, D., Musicus, A., & Hammond D. (2016). The influence of sugar-sweetened beverage health warning labels on parents' choices. *Pediatrics*. 137(2)e20153185.

⁶ Tobacco-Free Kids. Tobacco Warning Labels: Evidence of Effectiveness. <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0325.pdf>

⁷ Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research. (2011). Adult Overweight and Obesity in New York State, 2000–2010. New York State Department of Health. http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/docs/2000-2010_adult_obesity.pdf

⁸ New York State Department of Health. (2013). 2010–2012 Student Weight Status Category Reporting System Data as of July, 2013. <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/chac/general/pdf/g65.pdf>

⁹ Office of the State Comptroller. (2012). Soaring Health Care Costs Highlight Need to Address Childhood Obesity. http://osc.state.ny.us/reports/obesity_and_child_obesity_10_23_12.pdf