



American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Vermont Chapter



VERMONT ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

February 7, 2013

Michael Fisher, Chair
House Health Care Committee
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Representative Fisher:

The Vermont Medical Society, American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter and the Vermont Academy of Family Physicians have come together to show their strong support for a tax on sugar sweetened beverages.

Obesity in this country has reached epidemic proportions, and nowhere is that fact scarier than when we look at our children. The percentage of overweight children is growing at an alarming rate: the nutrition and activity environment has become one that fosters excess energy consumption and reduced physical activity. Parents and families are partnering with their pediatricians on strategies to help children decrease their consumption of fast food, sugared beverages and TV time as well as increase physical activity. However the environment remains challenging.

There are significant reasons why a tax of this nature should be considered. Sugared beverages are a significant driver of the obesity epidemic. Even more shocking is the Lancet statistic that for every additional sugared beverage consumed each day, the likelihood of a child becoming obese increases by 60%. History has proven that taxes can impact consumption – just look at cigarette sales and gasoline. Consumers do not like paying extra for items that are not essential to their daily lives, and a sugared beverage tax may be the incentive parents need to choose healthier choices for their families. It is also in the country's best interest to tackle this issue head on. Obese children are developing type 2 diabetes, liver disease and sleep apnea. Childhood obesity leads to obese adults, and obese adults have significantly more health and productivity problems. The medical care costs of obesity in the United States are staggering. In 2008 dollars, these costs totaled about \$147 billion.

The fact remains that if we don't solve this problem, we have failed our children. If we do not address childhood obesity now, we will be robbing our children of healthy, productive futures. Lawmakers should consider sugared beverage taxes as part of a larger strategy to combat this preventable epidemic. Our children's health depends on it.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Stephanie Winters
Executive Director, American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter
Executive Director, Vermont Academy of Family Physicians
Operations Director, Vermont Medical Society