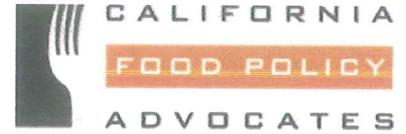


June 19, 2012



The Honorable Tom LaBonge  
Member, Committee on Arts, Parks, Health and Aging  
Los Angeles City Council,  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 480  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Los Angeles Office  
205 S. Broadway  
Suite 402  
Los Angeles  
CA 90012

Date: 6/19/12

Submitted in OPMA Committee

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**RE: SODA MOTION - SUPPORT** Council File No: 11-1867

Dear Councilmember LaBonge:

Item No.: 4  
Deputy: Adam R. Lid

My name is Matthew Sharp. I work with California Food Policy Advocates here in Los Angeles. We are a statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Our primary strategy is to increase use of the federal nutrition assistance programs, such as school breakfast, child care meals and food stamps (now known as CalFresh) to help families make better food choices.

These investments are the most significant tool that policymakers have to reduce food insecurity and childhood obesity simultaneously, since USDA's \$90 billion annual budget for food assistance can help make healthy food more affordable and more available. I am a member of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council, a longtime city resident and parent of two small children that enjoy hours of recreation and enrichment weekly at city parks, libraries, pools and other city facilities.

In 2001, I had the opportunity to testify in front of the City Council and this Committee regarding a motion from Councilmembers Perry and Garcetti to eliminate the sale of sodas from city facilities and programs serving children. Subsequently, I served on the City's Child Nutrition and Health Task Force, which was assigned to implement the Council's actions on child nutrition. From 2001 through 2006, the Task Force took several important steps forward, such as developing materials and other forms of support for city staff to promote consistent health messages in programs that serve children and teens, as well as increasing use of USDA funds for meals or snacks. The Task Force did not succeed in significantly reducing the sales of sweetened beverages, snacks and junk foods to children at city facilities because the city's concessions and vending contracts did not receive the same attention as the energy devoted to increasing positive, health-promoting activities.

In the eleven years since Council initially considered reducing soda sales, the world has changed significantly. LAUSD became the first large school district in the nation to stop soda sales altogether in 2002. The State of California enacted legislation in 2005 to phase out soda sales from all school campuses. And, in 2010, the State enacted legislation to change the beverages served in all day care homes and child care centers by eliminating all

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CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

sweetened drinks and requiring providers to aggressively promote serving water. USDA is expected to propose regulations later this year to phase out the sale of sodas and sports drinks from schools nationwide, in response to recommendations from the Institute of Medicine.

Fortunately, policymakers have not singled out sweetened beverages as the only culprit for the obesity epidemic; policies have been changed and investments have been made to strengthen physical education in schools, promote increased fruit and vegetable intake, encourage more cooking at home, and to combat the invasive marketing of the calorie industries by using billboards, bus advertisements and clever strategies to change community norms about food and beverage habits. Public health authorities in Los Angeles and around the nation are sending consistent messages to the public to reduce calorie intake through the Rethink Your Drink trainings, Soda Free Summer campaign and the Be Sugar Savvy. The City Council can further support parents in implementing these strategies by ensuring that city facilities don't undermine the clear public health messages.


We are writing to encourage you to adopt Councilmember Englander's motion to phase out soda sales in parks and libraries. It is an excellent opportunity for the city to lead residents towards improving habits by setting an example on public property.

We encourage you to strengthen the motion's impact in three ways:

- 1) Establish a public goal to challenge residents to move towards a soda-free city.
- 2) Develop a strategy to increase consumption of free drinking water at city facilities.
- 3) Convene a meeting with DRP staff to devise strategies to reduce the unauthorized sale of high-calorie snack foods and beverages at playgrounds by pushcart vendors.

If we can provide additional information, please contact us at 213.482.8200.

Sincerely,

  
Matthew Sharp  
Senior Advocate