

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testimony of Elizabeth Marchetta, Manager – Food and Nutrition Services, Baltimore City Public Schools, Regarding Council Bill 15-0213R

I would first like to thank Chairperson Mary Pat Clarke, Vice Chair Bill Henry, and the members of the Education and Youth Committee for this opportunity to present the views of Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) on City Council Bill (Resolution) 15-0213R, regarding the effects that sugar has on our children, as well as ways that these effects can be reduced and mitigated to ensure a healthy future for all of Baltimore's children.

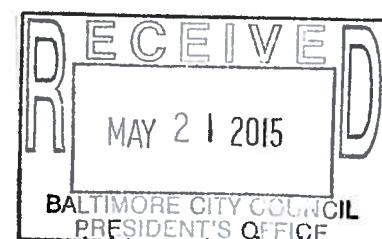
In Baltimore City nearly four in ten children are overweight or obese and one in four live in a food desert (defined as an area where affordable and nutritious food is difficult to obtain). In these circumstances, school meals represent a powerful opportunity to improve the health of Baltimore's children. There is evidence that school meals are nutritionally superior to the meals served at home or brought to school, and can therefore have a preventative effect on childhood obesity.

City Schools' Office of Food & Nutrition Services is committed to improving the quality of meals offered to students, by ensuring that menus are in compliance with USDA regulations for all federal meal programs. The office also strives to eliminate ingredients that have not been shown to promote good health by scientific and peer-reviewed studies, as long as their elimination not conflict with State and Federal requirements.

City Schools is proactively working to reduce the amount of High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS) consumed by students, by changing product specifications and switching to healthier menu items. Specifically, the district has focused on reducing consumption of sugary drinks:

- In SY2011-12, City Schools served more than 13 million cartons of milk to students of which 80% was flavored (chocolate or strawberry). This represented a significant amount of high fructose corn syrup in students' diets.
- In SY2013-14, City Schools eliminated flavored milk from the breakfast menu, thereby increasing the percentage of children taking unflavored nonfat or 1% milk at this meal from 20% to 100%.
- The district is currently seeking to further reduce consumption of flavored milk through practices that promote selection of white nonfat or 1% milk. In addition, we are investigating flavored milk products that do not contain HFCS.

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- All foods and beverages sold outside of federal meal programs must comply with the Maryland Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in Schools, as follows:

- All juices are made with 100% juice with no added sugars
- The sale of caffeinated beverages and soda is prohibited
- A la carte beverage menu only includes 100% fruit juice, water and milk

Finally, City Schools makes a concerted effort to promote student consumption of foods with naturally occurring sugars. In recent years the district has dramatically increased the availability of fresh produce and has transitioned from canned fruits and vegetables to fresh salad and fresh fruit at all school five days/week. In just the past three years the district has tripled our fresh produce purchases from 1.5 million pounds to 4.5 million pounds annually.

City Schools and the Office of Food and Nutrition Services are committed to promoting the health of our students by reducing the consumption of High Fructose Corn Syrup and other factors in childhood obesity in our student meal program. Thank you for this opportunity to present our views on this important topic.