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	Subject	CB 16-0617 – Sugar-sweetened Beverages – Warning Labels		

To: President and Members  
of the City Council  
c/o 409 City Hall

June 1, 2016

Council Bill 16-0617 – Sugar-sweetened Beverages – Warning Labels promotes health equity and education and the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) **strongly recommends a favorable report.**

The growing obesity epidemic across the county is set to be the next major public health battle. For the first time in history, children are developing diseases previously seen only in adults, such as adult-onset diabetes and early heart disease. Studies from the Department of Health and Human Services directly link this startling trend to the consumption of sugary drinks.<sup>1</sup>

*Drinking one SSB per day increases a child's odds of becoming obese by 60%.<sup>2</sup>* According to data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three school-aged children in Baltimore City are overweight or obese and one in four drink at least one soda every day.<sup>3</sup> Scientific studies from the BMJ show that Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs) are the primary sources of added sugar and calories in children's diets.<sup>4</sup>

BCHD epidemiologists reviewed eleven scientific and medical publications that include data from over 100 studies of more than 1 million people and found that *SSB consumption is associated with many negative health outcomes, including: weight gain/obesity/adiposity, dental cavities, endocrine and metabolic effects, chronic kidney disease, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.* Research also shows that reducing SSB consumption would decrease the risk of developing these conditions.<sup>5</sup>

Public health evidence clearly shows that SSB's are linked to poor health outcomes and increased health care costs. The estimated annual health care costs of obesity-related illnesses are a staggering \$190.2 billion.<sup>6</sup> *Childhood obesity alone is responsible for \$14 billion in direct*

<sup>1</sup>US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2862465/>

<sup>2</sup>US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11229668>

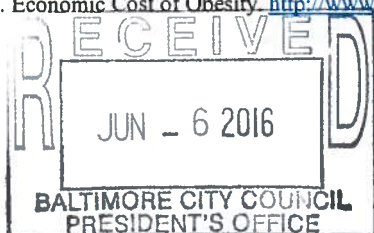
<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?TT=C&SID=HS&OID=H77&LID=BA&LID2=SL&YID=2013&YID2=SY&SYID=&EYID=&HT=QQ&LCT=LL&COL=S&ROW1=N&ROW2=N&TST=false&C1=&C2=&SC=DEFAULT&SO=ASC&VA=CI&CS=Y&DP=I&QP=G&FG=G1&FR=R1&FS=S1>

<sup>4</sup>[http://epi.grants.cancer.gov/diet/foodsources/added\\_sugars/table1a.html?&url=/diet/foodsources/added\\_sugars/table1a.html](http://epi.grants.cancer.gov/diet/foodsources/added_sugars/table1a.html?&url=/diet/foodsources/added_sugars/table1a.html)

<sup>5</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2009/11/the-negative-impact-of-sugar-sweetened-beverages-on-children-s-h.html>

<sup>6</sup>Natl League of Cities. Economic Cost of Obesity. <http://www.healthycommunitieshealthyfuture.org/learn-the-facts/economic-costs-of-obesity/>



*medical costs.*<sup>7</sup> The average annual health expenses for a child treated for obesity under Medicaid is \$4,000 higher than the average health expenses for all children under Medicaid and for those under private insurance the cost is over \$3,000 more than the average for children under private insurance.<sup>8</sup> SSBs contribute to dangerous and costly health outcomes.

Academic studies have shown that beverage companies disproportionately market their sugary drinks to low-income communities.<sup>9</sup> These communities already suffer from rampant health disparities and have the highest rates of diabetes and heart disease.<sup>10</sup> The marketing and consumption of SSBs is furthering social inequities and speeding our most vulnerable children toward poor health and shortened life spans.

Research from the Obesity Society, a nonprofit group dedicated to expanding research, prevention, and treatment of obesity, shows that *many parents are not aware that sugary drinks are linked to serious health risks* and that they would make different choices if they had more information.<sup>11</sup> Raising awareness so that consumers can make educated decisions regarding their health is exactly why warning labels are on cigarettes and alcohol – consumers must have the facts to make informed choices for themselves and their families.

Warning labels on all SSB advertisements, restaurant menus, and wherever SSBs are sold will provide accurate, evidence based information to consumers. The warning label proposed by this bill will state what doctors and scientists already know: that sugary drinks can lead to tooth decay, obesity, diabetes, and other preventable illnesses. Children and their parents deserve to know the facts about threats to their health. We cannot wait until another generation grows up with poor health and preventable disease; now is the time for bold action.

**BCHD strongly supports** this legislation and urges a favorable report.

cc: Angela Gibson, Office of the Mayor  
Andrew Nicklas, Director of Legislative Affairs, Department of Health

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> State of Obesity.org Fast Facts: Economic Costs of Obesity. <http://stateofobesity.org/facts-economic-costs-of-obesity/>

<sup>9</sup> US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4501500/#FN3>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Obesity Society. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2008.264/epdf>

