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March 14, 2014

The Honorable William Monnig  
California State Senator, 17<sup>th</sup> District  
State Capitol Building, Room 4066  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1000 – Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Safety Warning Bill - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Monning:

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports SB 1000, which will require a warning label on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) sold in California. As an organization whose mission is to improve the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food, we believe that consumers should also have the right to know about the unique and chronic health problems associated with soda and other sugary drink consumption.

Strengthening the federal nutrition programs as well as the food and beverage environments are key to helping low-income individuals make healthy lifestyle choices. SB 1000 is a common sense approach that strengthens the food and beverage environment. Findings from a recent focus group of CalFresh participants in the Central Valley revealed that while many participants were generally aware that SSBs (i.e., sodas and energy drinks) are unhealthy, several participants were unclear how SSBs are connected to the rising obesity rates even though there is overwhelming science linking the obesity epidemic to the consumption of soda and other sugary drinks. Making the connection clear between SSBs, obesity and the health effects of obesity (i.e., diabetes, tooth decay, and heart disease) will reinforce the message that consumers should reduce SSB consumption and drink healthier beverages, like water.

Additionally, the focus group findings also demonstrated that there is confusion among consumers about the unhealthiness of certain SSBs. Most participants understood that sodas and energy drinks are not “healthy” beverage choices, but many were unclear about the healthfulness of SSBs, like electrolyte replacement drinks, flavored waters, and less than 100%

juices, which are all beverages that may contain the same amount of added sugar as soda and in some cases even more. Several of the participants thought that these other SSB beverages are healthy. This example further demonstrates the need for having a warning label to inform consumers.

The science is clear – SSBs are contributing to the obesity epidemic. A 2013 study found that in California 19% of children ages 2-5, 32% of children age 6-11 and 65% of adolescents (ages 12-17) consume at least one soda or other sugary drink every day. Educating parents about the health effect of SSBs, as well as improving water access in schools and public spaces, can reduce a child's risk of becoming obese.

Requiring a warning label about the harmful effects of consuming drinks with added sugars will protect consumers and promote informed purchasing decisions as well as lead consumers towards drinking healthier beverages, like water. CFPA thanks you for your leadership on this important public health legislation. If I can provide additional information, please contact me at 213.482.8200 x203.

Sincerely,

  
Ariana Oliva  
Nutrition Policy Advocate