

Public Comment by Janna Simon, Program Manager, Illinois Public Health Institute and the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity

10/31/16

Cook County Budget Hearing- Downtown Chicago

Comments:

- Hello, my name is Janna Simon and I'm the Program Manager at the Illinois Public Health Institute and also representing the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity
- We support a sweetened beverage tax for Cook County.
- I wanted to share a bit more about what we know has happened with sugary drink taxes in other locations.
- First, I'd like to address the claims from the beverage industry that taxes in other places haven't worked to reduce obesity. The taxes opponents cite as "not working" are very small and unlikely to affect consumers' decisions. Some are levied as a sales tax and thus applied at checkout and hidden from consumers, which economists know doesn't impact purchasing behaviors of these products.
- More recently implemented taxes are working. Since the country of Mexico implemented a tax on sugary drinks only in January of 2014, a study of the impact found that sugary drink purchases dropped by 6 percent, on average, and sales of non-sugary drinks increased 4 percent.
- A study conducted on the impact of the Berkeley, CA sugary drink excise tax found that there was a 21% *decrease* in sugary drink consumption in low-income neighborhoods of Berkeley compared to a 4% *increase* in sugary drink consumption in comparison cities (San Francisco and Oakland) in the 4 months after implementation (and 8 months after the vote).
- Additionally, in Berkeley, \$1.5 million in revenue from their local sugary drink tax is being used to combat heart disease, diabetes and obesity through grants to promote nutrition and physical activity in schools and communities.
- We'd also like to see 5% of the revenues generated from a sweetened beverage tax in Cook County be used for evidence-based chronic disease prevention initiatives.
- We know from a recent poll commissioned by the American Heart Association that 58% of the County supports a sweetened beverage tax. Since we know sugary drinks are the number one source of added sugar in the diet and have been linked to increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, tooth decay and some cancers, this is a healthy source of revenue and a great opportunity to improve and expand the county's public safety and health system.
- Thank you.