



Cook County Board
Testimony of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
In Opposition to Repeal of the Sweetened Beverage Tax.

The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law opposes the repeal of the sweetened beverage tax, and we urge members of the Board to vote against its repeal, if and when such a vote is taken.

We spoke in favor of the one cent per ounce tax on sweetened beverages at the County Board budget hearings in October 2016. We supported this tax then because of the public health benefits it promised and the much-needed revenue it would supply. We continue to support the tax, and we urge County Board members to not allow the proposed repeal.

In the months since passage of the sweetened beverage tax, the health benefits of reducing children's and adults' consumption of sweetened beverages have only become clearer. As numerous health and public health experts have advised the Board, discouraging sweetened beverage consumption by children and adults over time will assist in lowering obesity rates, prevent type 2 diabetes, reduce cardiovascular disease, reduce kidney decline in women, and reduce other serious health problems.

Likewise, the need for the additional revenue the tax is providing for important county services has also become clearer. The tax will generate approximately \$200 million each year which will protect essential funding for public services and programs such as opening new lifestyle centers in south and west side communities, career training and development programs for teens and young adults, community health and wellness initiatives, doctors, nurses, and others providing health care to Cook County residents, and prosecutors, public defenders, and public safety officers in the County public safety system.

Tellingly, the proposed repeal ordinance does not contest the health benefits of the sweetened beverage tax or the importance of the programs and services it funds. Nor





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does it propose an alternate way to raise the revenue. Rather, it simply says that the tax harms businesses. This is not the first time, nor will it be the last that time, that government regulation and taxes allegedly “harm” businesses in order to protect and advance the health of the public. Such regulation and taxes, along with public education and medical advice, are important tools to encourage the public toward healthier living.

The County Board did the right thing when it enacted the sweetened beverage tax. We oppose repeal and urge commissioners to vote against repeal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted September 13, 2017

John M Bouman, President
Margaret Stapleton, Community Justice Director



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