

Hello, I'm Dr. Crosh. I'm a third year pediatric resident at Advocate Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn and member of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am here today to support Cook County's sweetened beverage tax.

A long term study found that 1 sugary drink per day increases a child's odds of becoming obese by 60%.¹ As a pediatrician, I see the health effects of overweight and obese children firsthand. I have a patient, 11-year-old obese male, we'll call him Steve, who despite his best efforts has not been able to lose weight. Steve gets teased at school due to his size and is unable to keep up with his peers during gym class. Being obese significantly increases his risk of developing diabetes, coronary artery disease, and certain types cancer.² He drinks little soda, but a lot of sugary juices. Despite my best efforts, the juice keeps getting purchased by Mom. Diabetes runs in his family, and he is already showing signs of insulin resistance with skin changes called acanthosis nigricans, meaning his is already on the path for developing type 2 diabetes.

Steve is not alone in our clinic. He is becoming more of the norm. Childhood obesity is on the rise, and is becoming an epidemic, since 1976 has tripled from 5.5% to 17% in 2012.³ According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, a 5-year-old entering kindergarten obese is 8 times more likely than their normal weight peers to be obese at age 14. An overweight 5-year-old is 4 times more likely to become obese by 14⁴. An obese or overweight child has the odds stacked against them, and few children are able to overcome this.

These numbers are terrifying to me as a pediatrician and they should be to you as well as tax payers and as commissioners of cook county. It is estimated that the cost of obesity in the US was 149.4 billion dollars and the cost will continue to rise⁵.

This tax will work. Philadelphia had a similar tax, and while some consumers went elsewhere to purchase their soda, total soda consumption decreased by 27%⁶. Berkley, California saw a similar result with consumption decreasing by 21%⁷. Chicago will be no different.

Truthfully, this tax won't end childhood obesity, or obesity in general. It's going to be a group effort and I am asking for your help. I can't do this alone. Pediatricians, clinicians can't do this alone. But the funds raised by this tax can help. You can help. The long term effects of obesity are too costly to ignore. The cost to Chicagoans health and to the public health system are simply too great. So please help me. Please help my patients.

Do not repeal this tax.

Thank you.

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