

February 18, 2016

Dear New York State Assembly Members and State Senators,

Public Health Solutions strongly supports the proposed legislation – Assembly Bill 2320-B and Senate Bill S 6435 — to require warning labels on sugary drinks. The label would inform New York consumers of the increased risk of obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay from overconsumption of these products.

Public Health Solutions is a nonprofit organization that develops, implements and advocates dynamic solutions to prevent disease and improve community health. We conduct comprehensive research providing insight on public health issues, create and manage community health programs, and provide services to organizations to address public health challenges.

Each day, we see the wide-ranging and detrimental health effects of non-nutritious foods, including sugary drinks, in our work. We operate a wide range of programs that support evidence-based practices to promote healthy eating and to reduce incidence of diet-related disease. These include assistance with food stamps and WIC applications and a range of initiatives to design to enhance access to healthy food in low-income neighborhoods.

The proposed warning label will state: “SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes and tooth decay.” This warning is based on the best available science. The recently released Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015–2020 (DGA) noted that reducing consumption of added sugars reduces the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, as well as some cancers and heart disease. The DGA also found that sugary drinks are the largest source of added sugars in our diets, accounting for 47 percent.

The warning label can be effective, as we have seen with public health warnings for tobacco products and alcohol. In fact, a recent study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, reported that parents who saw a sugary drink warning label were 20 percent less likely to buy a sugary drink for their child.

Finally, a warning label allows consumers to make a more informed choice about the products they consume. In fact, the RWJF-funded study also found that almost 75 percent of parents supported having a warning label.

Please support the sugary drink warning label legislation.

Sincerely,

Lisa David
President and CEO, Public Health Solutions