

October 1, 2025

Dear Massachusetts State Lawmakers:

We, the undersigned groups, write to convey our strong endorsement of H.2468/S.1571, *An Act for Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures*.

People's eating habits are shaped from an early age and are influenced by the food environments we experience as children. Unfortunately, our food environments are not always designed to encourage healthy habits, and unhealthy diets are a leading cause of chronic disease. One in three adults in Massachusetts has a chronic health condition and Massachusetts spends over \$41 billion annually on costs related to chronic disease.¹ We need to transform our food environments to give children the opportunity to thrive into healthy adults.

H.2468/S.1571 offers a novel approach to enhancing nutrition in schools and restaurants to reduce the risk of diet-related diseases, like cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

At chain restaurants, H.2468/S.1571 will require warnings on menu items with more than a day's worth of added sugars, empowering consumers with the information they need to make healthier choices and encouraging restaurants to offer healthier options. It will also establish minimum nutrition standards for kids' meals, making it easier for Massachusetts parents and caregivers to purchase healthy foods for their kids.

In schools, H.2468/S.1571 will prohibit unhealthy beverage advertisements and ban schools from participating in company-sponsored incentive programs that reward children with sugary drinks for good academic performance or reward schools for selling sugary drinks.

These changes to the food environment are urgently needed to improve child nutrition. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting added sugars to less than 10% of total calories,² but on average U.S. youth consume over 40% more added sugar per day than recommended.³ Sugar-sweetened beverages are the top source of added sugars in the U.S. diet, accounting for 24% of Americans' added sugar intake,⁴ and are associated with weight gain and dental decay in childhood, and type 2 diabetes and heart disease in adults.^{5,6,7,8}

The bill targets restaurant food and unhealthy food marketing for good reason. One in three U.S. adults⁹ and children¹⁰ consumes fast food on a given day, and restaurant meals are often loaded with added sugars. An average default fast food combo meal contains 68 grams of sugar¹¹ and a large-sized full-calorie fountain cola typically contains around 109 grams of added sugars¹² (more than twice the recommended daily limit for most adults). Unhealthy food marketing is everywhere and poses particular risks for children. Children are exposed to unhealthy food and beverage ads through television, online, and even in schools,¹³ and when kids are exposed to marketing, they are more likely to request a marketed product.¹⁴ Children under age 8 are especially vulnerable to these ads, as they cannot understand their persuasive intent.¹⁵

Please co-sponsor H.2468/S.1571 to protect Massachusetts youth from unhealthy food marketing and help set them up for a healthy future!

Sincerely,

Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs
American Heart Association
Boston Food Forest Coalition
Center for Science in the Public Interest

Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Fairplay (formerly Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood)
Haley House
Interfaith Public Health Network
KAS Consulting
Massachusetts Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Northeast Organic Farming Association - Massachusetts Chapter
Sustainable Business Network of MA
Union Combined Parish of the United Methodist Church

¹ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. SHIP - Chronic Disease. Mass.gov. 2024. Accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ship-chronic-disease>

² U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025.; 2020. DietaryGuidelines.gov

³ What We Eat in America, NHANES 2017-March 2020 Prepandemic, individuals 2 years and over (excluding breast-fed children), day 1. Available: www.ars.usda.gov/nea/bhnrc/fsrg

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025.; 2020. DietaryGuidelines.gov

⁵ Nguyen M, Jarvis SE, Tinajero MG, et al. Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and weight gain in children and adults: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies and randomized controlled trials. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2023;117(1):160-174. doi:10.1016/j.ajcnut.2022.11.008

⁶ Moynihan PJ, Kelly S a. M. Effect on caries of restricting sugars intake: systematic review to inform WHO guidelines. *J Dent Res.* 2014;93(1):8-18. doi:10.1177/0022034513508954

⁷ Neuenschwander M, Ballon A, Weber KS, et al. Role of diet in type 2 diabetes incidence: umbrella review of meta-analyses of prospective observational studies. *BMJ.* 2019;366:l2368. doi:10.1136/bmj.l2368

⁸ Narain A, Kwok CS, Mamas MA. Soft drinks and sweetened beverages and the risk of cardiovascular disease and mortality: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Int J Clin Pract.* 2016;70(10):791-805. doi:10.1111/ijcp.12841

⁹ Fryar C, Hughes J, Herrick K, Ahluwalia N. Fast Food Consumption Among Adults in the United States, 2013–2016. Center for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics; 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db322-h.pdf>

¹⁰ Fryar CD, Carroll MD, Ahluwalia N, Ogden CL. Fast Food Intake Among Children and Adolescents in the United States, 2015-2018. Center for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics; 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db375-h.pdf>

¹¹ Vercammen KA, Frelief JM, Moran AJ, et al. Calorie and Nutrient Profile of Combination Meals at U.S. Fast Food and Fast Casual Restaurants. *Am J Prev Med.* 2019;57(3):e77-e85. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2019.04.008

¹² Center for Science in the Public Interest. Sweet Excess: a restaurant menu survey. July 2021. Accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.cspinet.org/resource/sweet-excess>

¹³ Center for Science in the Public Interest. Fact sheet: food marketing to kids. May 9, 2024. Accessed October 3, 2024. <https://www.cspinet.org/resource/fact-sheet-food-marketing-kids>

¹⁴ De Jans S, Van de Sompel D, Hudders L, Cauberghe V. Advertising targeting young children: an overview of 10 years of research (2006–2016). *Int J Advert.* 2019;38(2):173-206. doi:10.1080/02650487.2017.1411056

¹⁵ De Jans S, Van de Sompel D, Hudders L, Cauberghe V. Advertising targeting young children: an overview of 10 years of research (2006–2016). *Int J Advert.* 2019;38(2):173-206. doi:10.1080/02650487.2017.1411056