



The Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council

“Celebrating our 43rd year representing the interests of low income Vermonters”

Obesity is regressive – A sugary drink tax can help low income Vermonters

VLIAC supports a 2 penny per ounce tax on sugar sweetened beverages in the effort to reduce obesity, to help low income folks understand better nutrition choices, to promote obesity prevention and education efforts, and to provide funding to subsidize the purchase of healthy foods and provide greater access to healthcare.

Low income people are disproportionately affected by obesity and all of the health consequences it can cause; including the increased healthcare cost to all of us.

The Vermont Health Department reports that low income Vermonters have two times the rate of obesity, are four times more likely to have a heart attack, and are three times more likely to have diabetes. Poor Vermonters also have less access to preventative care measures, and nutritious food and drink alternatives are often more expensive than a sugar sweetened beverages.

A tax on sugary drinks could reduce health care cost caused by obesity, while simultaneously raising revenue to fund positive, preventative health measures for Vermonters.

VLIAC supports a sugary drink tax because we believe low income Vermonters need healthy food and health care much more than they need cheap drinks.

Low income folks are more sensitive to prices, especially youth. A public awareness campaign, along with a price increase, will encourage low income Vermonters to make the healthier choice and discourage the purchasing of the higher priced unhealthy choice.

A two-cent-per-ounce tax on sugary drinks has the potential to raise more than \$30 million for Vermont. This money could be used to fund programs that help low-income Vermonters lead healthier lives, such as programs to make health care more affordable, subsidize school meals and improve access to nutritious foods like fresh fruit and vegetables -- foods that could also be purchased at local grocers as well as farmers markets.

Opponents' arguments that this tax isn't fair to low income Vermonters, rings insincere when nearly a billion dollars is spent marketing and advertising these products that are fueling the obesity epidemic, affecting low income citizens the most.

The suggestion that this is a hidden regressive tax is just not true. The whole point of an excise tax is that it *isn't* hidden. Consumers see it represented in the price of the item on the shelf when they make their purchasing decision instead of the tax being tacked onto their bill at the cash register.

Vermont along with many other states choose to tax unhealthy behaviors. We are always looking for acceptable taxes and those that make sense. The Sugar Sweetened Beverage tax is a funding source that is related to the cost of healthcare, and to the wellbeing of Vermonters

Taxing sugary drinks that have no nutritional value, and cause unhealthy outcomes makes all the sense in the world, in this critical budget year.

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