

VLIAC Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council

“Celebrating 45 years of representing the interest of low income Vermonters”

February 1, 2018

Senator Clair Ayer

Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Testimony on S.70

Dear Senator Ayer and Senate Health and Welfare Committee Members,

I am writing to express the support of the Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council (VLIAC) for bill S.70.

VLIAC represents the most vulnerable of Vermonters and is concerned about the adverse health effects of poor nutrition and the targeting of the low income community by the beverage industry. This community suffers disproportionately from chronic and diet-related diseases such as heart disease, cancer and asthma, brought about by sugary drinks and poor nutrition. Nearly a third of Vermont's youth are overweight or obese.

As you know, we are a strong supporter of a two cent per ounce excise tax on sugary drinks as a way to decrease the consumption of these harmful drinks and provide resources for healthy foods and healthcare, especially to low income Vermonters.

We know that each additional serving of soda or sweetened juice drink a child consumes per day, the child's chance of becoming overweight increases by 60%. More Vermont families are eating out, and a good part of their food budgets is spent on foods prepared away from home, in restaurants.

We see the kids' meals campaign as a complementary effort that continues the work to educate Vermonters about the harms of sugary drinks while going a step further to eliminate them as the default choice for restaurant kids' meals. Doing this and providing healthy foods as the first option continues to make the healthy choice the easy choice for not only kids, but their parents as well.

We also support the kids' meals effort as we see it as a way to create health equity among all income levels and ensure that no matter what restaurant or price tag, families will be able to get a healthy meal for their children.

We hope the legislature will support S.70 and move toward a healthier Vermont in this effort.



Karen Lafayette, Legislative Advocate

Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council