



Before the House Ways and Means
HB1469 – For Our Kids Act
SUPPORT

Interfaith Works is a nonprofit that serves 35,000 Montgomery County residents each year with programs that provide supportive housing and emergency shelter, address essential needs like food, clothing and emergency rental assistance, and provide job placement services.

The mission and vision of HB1469 – taxing a substance that substantially contributes to poor health outcomes for all, but particularly our most marginalized and using that revenue to fund school meals, childcare subsidies, and other essential services – is completely aligned with the work Interfaith Works has been doing in Montgomery County for nearly half a century.

The For Our Kids Act will improve the health of Maryland children and families while addressing budget cuts that will impact families across the state. Sugary drinks have become more and more common and accessible, and the beverage industry targets children in their advertising messaging. Public health experts, pediatricians and dentists have been warning for decades about the health impacts of the overconsumption of sugar-laden beverages, strongly advising that they should be a rare treat. Instead beverage industry advertising strategies have created a landscape in which, for too many children and adults, sugar-laced beverages are a staple.

In particular the United States is seeing a dramatic increase in obesity and type-2 diabetes, and people living in poverty are far more likely to be impacted. Similarly, though rates of tooth decay and dental disease – and sugary beverages are the worst causative culprit for both – have been stable in the U.S. for some time, children living in poverty are more than twice as likely to suffer significant dental disease, and for that dental disease to go untreated. Funds generated from this tax can support communities hardest hit by these diseases, and help kids access healthy meals at school, families access affordable childcare, and the State fund essential services.

Taxing substances that damage human health is a practice that is proven to both decrease the use of those substances and generate revenue to partially offset the fiscal costs of those health impacts to taxpayers and communities. This bill, taxing unhealthy drinks to fund healthy school meals, early childcare and other state services, is a win/win/win especially during these challenging financial times. Reducing the consumption of sugary beverages will lead to better health outcomes for children and adults. Other cities and counties around the world have implemented a similar tax with positive outcomes – both for human health and the economy.

As an organization long concerned with the challenges faced by Montgomery County's most marginalized, Interfaith Works strongly supports the For Our Kids Act and urges a favorable report on HB 1469.

Lynne

Lynne Harris
Board Member

