

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the  
Maryland House of Delegates  
Ways and Means  
For the Hearing on Taxes - Sugary Beverage Distributor Tax (For Our Kids Act)  
(HB1469)  
March 6, 2025 - Favorable**

Free State PTA represents over 70,000 members across more than 500 public schools in Maryland, including families, students, teachers, administrators, and community leaders. As Maryland's largest child advocacy organization, we are committed to ensuring the educational success and well-being of all children.

We support House Bill 1469, which would impose a tax on sugary beverages, with funds going to universal meals and child care scholarships. Free State PTA also supports using funds to increase funding for Prekindergarten. This bill aligns with Free State PTA's core principles of promoting safe, supportive learning environments and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities for all students.

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 over the years have become a household staple, when they should merely be a treat. Funds from this tax can support communities hardest hit by these diseases, and help kids access healthy meals at school and affordable childcare.

Free State PTA is deeply concerned about the industry's marketing of their unhealthy drinks to children. We now know that drinks made with artificial sweeteners lead to many of the same health problems as sugary drinks. No one should be surprised. The beverage industry targets children as young as 2 years old with ads for sugary drinks. That's shameful. One study found that preschoolers saw 26% more TV ads for sugary drinks in 2018 than in 2013, despite a 35% decrease in TV viewing time. It also showed that kids see more than four times as many ads for sweetened children's drinks than adults do. We support taxing these unhealthy drinks to fund school meals for all, while also funding early childhood education.

Taxing unhealthy drinks to fund healthy school meals is a win-win for MD. Studies have shown that such taxes can significantly reduce the consumption of sugary beverages, leading to better health outcomes for our children. Other cities and counties around the world that have implemented a tax are reporting it a success.

It is our responsibility to protect our children's health and future. By supporting the sugary drink tax, we are taking a proactive step towards creating a healthier Maryland for all families. I urge you to consider the long-term benefits of the For Our Kids Act and vote in favor of its passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I urge a favorable report on HB 1469.

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