



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**WRITTEN AND ORAL TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1556 (WITH AMMENDMENTS)
Business Regulation - Sugary Beverage Advertisements - Warning Labels**

Committee: Health

By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)

Hearing Date: March 10, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 1556, which represents a reasonable public health measure that ensures Maryland residents receive clear and accurate information about the health risks associated with sugary beverages when those beverages are advertised on public property.

HB 1556 would require advertisements for sugary beverages displayed on property owned by the State or local governments to include a visible warning label stating that drinks with added sugar can contribute to obesity, type 2 diabetes, and tooth decay, and that they are not recommended for children. The warning must appear clearly in bold text so that consumers can easily see it when viewing the advertisement. Maryland could consider adopting a **standardized visual symbol or icon** (rather than text alone) for sugary beverage warnings in advertisements. Graphic warnings are easier for consumers—especially children and people with lower health literacy—to recognize quickly.

Sugary drinks are one of the largest sources of added sugar in the American diet and are strongly associated with preventable chronic diseases. High consumption of these beverages contributes to rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and dental disease—conditions that affect many Maryland residents and increase long-term health care costs.^{1,2} Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of sugary beverages. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that consumption of added sugars—including sugar-sweetened beverages—is associated with several chronic health conditions in children, including type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, obesity, asthma, and dental caries.^{2,3} Including **cardiovascular disease** in the warning language would ensure that the bill reflects current scientific evidence and more fully communicates the range of health risks associated with excessive sugar intake.

Warning labels are a well-established public health strategy. They do not restrict consumer choice or ban products; rather, they provide factual information that helps individuals make informed

¹<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8778490/#:~:text=Consuming%20two%20or%20more%20SSBs,to%20intake%20of%20SSBs78>.

²https://www.cdc.gov/Pcd/issues/2025/25_0195.htm#:~:text=Consumption%20of%20added%20sugars%20is,years%20from%202021%20through%202023.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-weight-growth/rethink-your-drink/index.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20CDC%2C%20sugary%20drinks%20are>

decisions. When advertising appears on government-owned property, it is reasonable for the state to ensure that public health information accompanies marketing messages for products linked to serious health risks.

HB 1556 is a modest step that promotes transparency and supports healthier communities while still allowing companies to advertise their products. By ensuring that residents see clear health warnings alongside sugary beverage advertisements on public property, Maryland can help families make more informed choices.

For these reasons, the Maryland Public Health Association respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 1556.

Thank you.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
PO Box 7045 · 6801 Oak Hall Ln · Columbia, MD 21045-9998
GetInfo@MdPHA.org www.mdpha.org 443.475.0242