

The Honorable Michael Brady, Chairman
The Honorable Jay Kaufman, Chairman
Joint Committee on Revenue
State House Room 34
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Brady and Chairman Kaufman,

Children and families in the Commonwealth continue to suffer from common but preventable chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and tooth decay. Sugary drinks are the single largest source of added sugar in the American diet. **A sugary drink tax can improve the financial health of our Commonwealth and, more importantly, the physical health of our children. Please support and report out favorably Senate Bill #1562 and House Bill #3329 *An Act to promote healthy alternatives to sugary drinks.***

Drinking sugar-filled beverages plays a major role in dental decay. Even with regular brushing and flossing, both diet and regular sodas can break down the enamel of teeth. Tiny bacteria live between and around teeth and, when exposed to the sugar in soft drinks, produce an acid that causes damage to tooth enamel, which eventually leads to decay and cavities. This acid can begin to wreak havoc in as little as 20 minutes.

According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, dental caries (tooth decay) is the single most common chronic disease among children. It is five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever.¹ Approximately, 60% of adolescents aged 12 to 19 in the United States had experienced dental caries in permanent teeth and 15% had untreated tooth decay.² The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry estimates that across the country more than \$40 billion is spent per year on the treatment of dental caries. At a time when the nation and the state are looking at ways to reduce the cost of health care, Medicaid (nationally) pays between \$100 million and \$400 million annually to treat early childhood caries.³

One of the most cost effective methods of preventing dental decay is through community water fluoridation. This legislation would fund a municipal grant program assisting communities in funding fluoridation initiatives. Fluoride helps prevent cavities by making the outer surface of teeth more resistant to the acid attacks that cause tooth decay. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that in the communities that included community water fluoridation, childhood decay decreased by nearly 30% over several years of follow up. This led the CDC to name community water fluoridation as one of the 10 greatest public health achievement of the 20th century. This effort is supported by over 65 leading health organizations, including World Health Organization, Massachusetts Dental Society, American Cancer Society, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

³ http://www.aapd.org/assets/1/7/State_of_Little_Teeth_Final.pdf

The Massachusetts Dental Society supports initiatives aimed at improving the oral health of the residents of the Commonwealth. This measure does just that by reducing the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

Thank you for your consideration and for thinking of the oral health and well-being of our children in the Commonwealth as you make decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Lustbader DMD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. David Lustbader
President
Massachusetts Dental Society