FACT SHEET: HEALTHY CHECKOUT AISLES FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES

LEGISLATIVE CONCEPT

This bill would prohibit the placement of sugar sweetened beverages near the check-out counter at supermarkets, large grocery stores, supercenters and warehouse clubs.

BACKGROUND

Each year, food retailers, and food and beverage manufacturers, spend billions of dollars on in-store marketing; influencing what consumers purchase through product placement, product displays, and in-store promotions. According to the report Sugar Overload: Retail Checkout Promotes Obesity conducted by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)\(^1\), most beverage offerings for all stores, food and non-food offering stores, were sugar-sweetened drinks, including regular sodas, fruit drinks, Vitamin water, calorically sweetened iced tea/coffee, and full calorie energy and sports drinks. Overall, the number of sugar-sweetened beverages displayed was three times as many as water, and four times as many as non-caloric beverages at checkout. Approximately 90% of all food and beverage available for sale at or near the checkout is unhealthy.

While the prevalence of unhealthy foods and beverages at checkout stands have become the norm in our food and non-food offering stores, obesity rates have skyrocketed. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity and severe obesity are evident as early as age 3-5 years and is now roughly triple what it was three decades ago. A 2012 study estimated that the annual cost of obesity in the United States is $190 billion.

According to the CDC, sugar sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugars in the diet of U.S. youth. While many Americans’ want to purchase healthier foods and beverages, the proliferation of unhealthy food and drink options can make it difficult for people to make health choices. A vast majority of checkout purchases are impulsive, or unplanned and result in extra calories from candy, soda and other junk foods and sugary drinks. Checkout sales of gum, candy, SSBs and other unhealthy products account for 46 percent of all supermarket sales of these products.\(^2\)

The placement of sugary drinks in the checkout aisles of grocery stores and other retail markets effectively promotes unhealthy diet decisions. According to CSPI’s report Temptation at Checkout\(^3\), beverage companies sell the equivalent of eight 12-ounce cans of soda per

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1 Center for Science and Public Interest, Sugar Overload: Retail Checkout Promotes Obesity. Washington, D.C.; 2014
person each week and soda and junk take up 20 to 30 times and much shelf space in grocery stores as produce. In the food and beverage industry, marketing is not exclusive to television, magazine and internet advertisements. Companies manipulate product, prices, and placement to encourage sales.

CSPI’s report profiles examples of healthy check out projects across the country and proposes that addressing the food and beverage environment begins with checkout. Several communities and companies have successfully implemented a healthy checkout model to help families make healthier choices. These models have received positive feedback from both store management and customers. Locally, the West-Sacramento-based grocer, Raley’s, began offering “family-friendly” lanes at its 114 California locations in 2014 and Target started piloting healthy checkout lanes in 30 of its stores in the Minneapolis, Denver and Dallas areas. These changes have won great reviews from customers.

Mounting evidence suggests that effectively curbing the obesity epidemic will require a comprehensive approach, similar to policy efforts previously employed to improve motor vehicle safety or curb usage of alcohol or tobacco. Implementing a variety of grassroots efforts to educate consumer about the harmful effects of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and passing several local and statewide policies to limit the availability, establish restrictions on advertising tactics and limit consumption by minors moves California forward in reducing demand and consumption of sugary drinks.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

The National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN) conducted a 2015 study on healthy checkout stands and proposed two model solutions for eliminating unhealthy food and beverage options at checkout. Similar to the NPLAN model, this proposal adopts a solution to limit which beverages may be available at checkout aisles in all retail establishments, including large and small convenience food stores and retail stores. Proposal would eliminate any beverage containing added caloric sweeteners.

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