

Massachusetts Heart on the Hill Virtual Campaign Toolkit

Week of March 22, 2021

SUGARY DRINKS



YOU'RE THE CURE



About You're the Cure

Every day, Americans' lives are touched by heart disease and stroke. Whether it's our own health that is impacted or the health of family members, friends or co-workers, there is a lot at stake when it comes to fighting our nation's No. 1 and No. 5 killers.

We all have the power to make a difference by speaking out for policies that help build healthier communities and lives. The moving force behind policy change for the American Heart Association are You're the Cure advocates like you. Advocates bring heart and stroke statistics to life by sharing their personal stories with lawmakers.

How to Advocate

Typically, You're the Cure advocates join at the Massachusetts State House each spring to speak to lawmakers in person. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are providing you with several ways to advocate remotely.

Through emails, phone calls, letters to the editor and social media, you can directly influence policy and improve the quality of life for all Massachusetts residents.

March Campaign: Sugary Drinks

During the week of March 22, we are asking you to focus your efforts one of our key issues – reducing the consumption of sugary drinks, which are a leading cause of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. We aim to do this by passing legislation (Bill SD.479 in the Senate; Bill HD.1420 in the House) that would tax dinks based on the amount of sugar they contain.

This toolkit will help you build an advocacy campaign to ensure all kids and families have access to healthy, affordable drinks. Together, with our policy leaders, we can stop sugary drinks from hooking our kids.

ISSUE OVERVIEW



The Problem

Sugary drinks are the single leading source of added sugars in the U.S. diet and are associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The American Heart Association recommends that children over the age of 2 have no more than one 8-ounce sugary drink a week. Yet children are consuming as much as ten times that amount.

The Impact

The United States spends at least \$147 billion per year treating preventable diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. One study put the total cost to treat health conditions related to obesity — plus obesity's impact on work attendance and productivity — at \$1.4 trillion annually.

The Solution

Taxing drinks based on sugar content will drive down consumption. The American Heart Association is recommending a tiered tax: drinks with little or no sugar aren't taxed at all; drinks with moderate sugar are subject a smaller tax rates; and drinks with a lot of sugar are subject to a higher tax rate.

The Results

- The beverage industry will have incentive to make healthier drinks.
- Consumers will have more choices at different price points. They can choose drinks with less added sugar at a lower price.
- A significant decline in sugary drink consumption may yield a greater reduction in chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes over time, helping people live longer and healthier lives, reducing health care costs, and strengthening our local economy.
- A sugary drink tax would raise at least \$300 million annually in Massachusetts. Those funds could be used to improve health care, increase access to clean drinking water, and provide healthy food to families most in need.

STEP 1: TALK TO YOUR LAWMAKERS

Lawmakers want to know what's important to their constituents. Calling or having face-to-face meetings with them, even over video conferencing, is an effective way to humanize your topic, make it relevant for the decision makers, and encourage these leaders to commit to this issue.

Whatever way you meet with your representatives, you can have a strong impact when you talk to them, or better yet, look them in the eye and answer their questions about your campaign, share personal stories and discuss proposed solutions.

Also, don't underestimate the value of talking with the staff of lawmakers. Staff are the lifeblood of a policy maker's office and are key to keeping your issue in front of the decision maker.

Below are some helpful tips to make the most of your conversations.

Save the Date

Making an appointment is easy. Simply call or email your legislators and talk to the office's scheduler.

To find your state representative and senator, <u>click here</u> or copy and past this link into your web browser (malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator) and enter your home address.

From there, you can find your legislators' email addresses and office phone numbers.



Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Be flexible with the date and time.
 Legislators have busy schedules, and meetings usually last 15 to 30 minutes.
- You may end up meeting with a staffer rather than a legislator, which is fine. Many legislators rely heavily on staff to keep them informed and make decisions about issues.

SUGARY DRINKS HEALTH FACTS

Please find the following science-approved facts or use in your conversations with lawmakers about enacting a sugary drink tax in Massachusetts.

The American Heart Association considers full-calorie soda, sports drinks, juice drinks, calorically sweetened teas and waters, and calorically sweetened ready-to-drink coffees as sugary drinks. Flavored animal milks, 100% fruit juice, unsweetened waters, teas and coffees, diet drinks and plant-based milk with fewer than 5 grams of added sugars per 8 ounces, infant formula, and medically necessary beverages are not considered sugary drinks

- Fact 1
- Sugary drinks are the single leading source of added sugars in the American diet. Nearly half of all added sugars consumed by the U.S. population come from sugary drinks.
- Fact 2
- In addition to weight gain, excess consumption of added sugars, especially from sugary drinks, raises the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and tooth decay.
- Fact 3
- In 2012, 50,000 deaths in the U.S. were associated with drinking too many sugary drinks. Of that, 40,000 deaths were attributed to heart problems and 10,000 were attributed to type 2 diabetes.
- Fact 4
- Children from low-income households are more likely to be heavy consumers of sugary drinks and take in more calories from sugary drinks per day, particularly from fruit drinks, than children from high-income households.
- Fact 5
- In 2013, Black children and teens saw more than twice as many ads for sugary drinks and energy drinks compared with white children and teens. Additionally, research shows that healthier foods and beverages are less available in low-income, Black and Hispanic communities.
- Fact 6
- Sales of sports drinks, energy drinks, bottled coffees and teas, and sweetened waters have been rising over the past 20 years. Sales of sports drinks have doubled from about two gallons per person per year in 2000 to more than four gallons per person per year in 2015.
- Fact 7
- In 2015, missed work due to sugary drink-related diseases was estimated to cost the nation \$11 billion per year due to obesity, \$10 billion per year due to high blood pressure, and \$2.2 billion per year due to diabetes (types 1 and 2).

BENEFITS OF TAXING DRINKS BASED ON SUGAR CONTENT

A growing number of diverse places across the country have adopted sugary drink taxes, including San Francisco, Oakland, Philadelphia, Seattle, Boulder, Colo., and Berkley, Calif.

Early research shows that these taxes are effective at reducing sugary drink consumption. In Berkeley, for example, a recent study found that sugary drink consumption dropped by 21% in low-income neighborhoods during the first four months of implementation, while water consumption increased by 63% compared to similar cities without the tax.

- In 2016, the Urban Institute estimated that a tax based on sugar content could reduce overall sugar consumption by 25%.
- Massachusetts can encourage healthier choices by passing legislation (Bill SD.479 in the Senate; Bill HD.1420 in the House) that would impose greater taxes on high-sugar beverages and lower taxes on lower-sugar beverages.
- The beverage industry will have incentive to make healthier drinks, which could result in healthier options on the store shelf.
- Consumers will have more choices at different price points. They can choose drinks with less added sugar at a lower price.
- A more significant decline in sugary drink consumption may yield a greater reduction in the risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease and type 2 diabetes over time helping people live longer and healthier lives, reducing health care costs for families and businesses, and strengthening state and local economies.
- The tiered excise tax on sugary drinks would raise at least \$300 million for Massachusetts, which could support nutrition programs serving low-income communities, increased access to clean drinking water in public schools and parks, and community hospitals.

STEP 2: WRITE TO YOUR NEWSPAPER

Public commentary has long been one of the most powerful ways to broadly communicate ideas. By having an op-ed or letter to the editor published in your local newspaper, you'll be able to convey this campaign's essential messages to legislators, journalists and the community.



Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an effective, simple way to spread awareness about your issue. As implied by the name, a letter to the editor is a short letter sent to the editor of a publication about an issue of concern.

- Your letter should be short and concise, usually up to 250 words. Most publications have limitations on how long letters can be, so we recommend you check the website of the publication you're submitting your letter to beforehand.
- Include your contact information. Publications will often call to verify your identity, so be sure to include your name, address, email and phone number when you submit your letter.
- Use a catchy title. Your title should offer a preview of what your letter is about in a way that attracts the attention of your audience.
- Your letter should seek to answer these two questions: Why is this issue important to you? Why is it important to people in your community?

Op-Eds

An op-ed, short for opinion editorial, generally gives a bit more space than a letter to the editor. Well-known individuals who aren't a part of the newspaper's editorial team most often write op-eds. However, many newspapers accept op-ed submissions from their readers.

- Check the submission guidelines. Most news outlets have strict guidelines on op-eds, including limits on word count (typically around 500) and specific directions on how to submit (via email or online). Check your paper's requirements before you start writing.
- Get to the point. Make your key points early and often, and back them up with facts and examples.
- Write like you talk. Avoid jargon, fancy words and slang. Your op-ed must be understandable to the general public, including people that may have no knowledge of the issue or your campaign.
- Share a story. A personal story is a great way to humanize your issue. Whenever possible include a story in your op-ed.

TEMPLATE FOR OP-ED AND LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We have provided templates below to you help write your letter to the editor or op-ed voicing support for a sugary drinks tax in Massachusetts. You may use as much material from this template as you would like, but we also encourage you to add your personal reasons for supporting a sugary drink tax in your submission. Remember, a personal story is a great way to humanize your issue and connect with your audience.

Letter to the Editor

To the editor:

The facts on sugary drinks are simple. They pose a real health risk. Kids especially are drinking too many of them. Over-consumption is taking a toll on our health care system and the economy.

As we look to reduce consumption of sugary drinks, Massachusetts should take a page from a growing number of places across the country that have adopted taxes on sugary drinks. These taxes raise much-needed revenue for important priorities. Early research also shows that they are effective at reducing consumption.

New research from the Urban Institute found that a sugary drink tax based on the amount of sugar a drink contains could be a particularly effective approach. It shows that a tax based on sugar content could reduce overall sugar consumption by 25%. It would encourage consumers to make healthier choices, give low-income consumers more opportunity to save money, and incentivize the beverage industry to make healthier drinks.

Perhaps most significantly, a decline in sugary drink consumption will eventually reduce chronic disease rates — helping people live longer and healthier lives, reducing health care costs, and strengthening our local and state economy.

A sugary drink tax based on sugar content would be a win for kids, a win for families, a win for businesses, a win for the economy, and a win for better health. Let's make it happen right here in Massachusetts.

Op-Ed

Here are the facts on sugary drinks.

We know that consumption of fruit drinks with added sugar, sports drinks, energy drinks and soda poses a real health risk to kids. These drinks are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet and are associated with an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

We know that kids are drinking too many of them. The American Heart Association recommends that kids over the age of 2 have no more than one 8-ounce sugary drink a week. Yet kids today are consuming as much as ten times that amount.

We know that this over-consumption is taking a toll on our health care system and the economy. Costs to treat obesity and related conditions run as high as \$1.4 trillion annually. Diabetes alone accounts for approximately \$245 billion in medical costs and lost productivity annually.

And we know that this is a significant issue right in Massachusetts.

As we look to reduce the consumption of sugary drinks, communities across the nation are pursuing a variety of approaches, such as removing sugary drinks from restaurant kids' meals, making sure only healthy options are offered in early childcare settings, and encouraging companies to market their healthier products. That's a good thing — we need an all-hands-on-deck approach.

One recent strategy showing real promise across the nation is taxation. A growing number of places have adopted taxes on sugary drinks, including San Francisco, Oakland, Philadelphia, Seattle, Boulder, Colo., and Berkley, Calif.

These taxes raise much needed revenue for important priorities, such as nutrition programs, pre-K expansion, school construction, parks and public safety initiatives. Early research also shows that they are effective at reducing consumption.

For example, a recent study found that soda sales in Berkeley dropped by 21% in low-income neighborhoods during the first four months of implementation. In Mexico, a one peso per liter sugary drink tax was implemented in 2014. A 2017 study found that over the first two years of the tax, there was a 7.6% reduction in purchases of taxed beverages and a 2.1% increase in purchases of untaxed drinks like bottled water.

All of these taxes have been based on volume, meaning drinks with five grams of added sugars or 50 grams are taxed at the same per ounce rate. The early returns are certainly

positive, but new research from the Urban Institute has found that a different type of structure could be even more effective: a sugary drink tax based on the amount of sugar a drink contains.

Under this structure, a drink with more added sugars would be taxed at a higher level per ounce than a drink with less added sugars. Similar to the volume-based approach, consumers would see the price difference of each drink right on the shelf.

According to the American Heart Association, which supports sugary drinks taxes, a tax by sugar content is the "ideal" approach. They recommend three simple tiers: drinks with little or no added sugars are not taxed at all, drinks with moderate amounts subject to a smaller tax rate, and drinks with higher amounts subject to a higher tax rate.

Taking this step would benefit Massachusetts in a number of ways.

Research shows that a tax based on sugar content could reduce overall sugar consumption by 25% — even higher than a volume-based approach. A lower tax rate on drinks with moderate amounts of added sugars would encourage consumers to make healthier choices and would give low-income consumers more opportunity to save money. In turn, the beverage industry would have incentive to make healthier drinks that are subject to a lower tax burden, or none at all.

Perhaps most significantly, a decline in sugary drink consumption will eventually reduce chronic disease rates – helping people live longer and healthier lives, reducing health care costs for families and businesses, and strengthening our local, state and national economy.

A sugary drink tax based on sugar content would be a win for kids, a win for families, a win for businesses, a win for the economy, and a win for better health. Let's make it happen right here in Massachusetts



NEWSPAPER CONTACTS

Here are instructions on how to submit a letter to the editor to a selection of the state's largest newspapers. Make sure to submit your letter to the paper that covers the region of the state you live in and include your name, address and contact information. If you'd like to submit an op-ed, we suggest contacting your local newspaper directly to get instructions on how to do so.

If you want to submit to a media outlet not listed here, you can usually find instructions on the outlet's website.

Boston Globe

Email: letter@globe.com

Word Limit: 200

Boston Herald

www.bostonherald.com/submit-letter/

Telegram & Gazette

Email: letters@telegram.com with "The People's Forum" as the subject line

Word Limit: 250

The Republican

Email: letters@repub.com

Word Limit: 250

The Lowell Sun

Email: letters@lowellsun.com

Word Limit: 250

Cape Cod Times

Email: letters@capecodonline.com

Word Limit: 250 for letters; 600-700 for op-eds

The Patriot Ledger

Email: editpage@patriotledger.com

Word Limit: 200

The Eagle Tribune

www.eagletribune.com/site/forms/online_ser

vices/letter/letter editor/

Word Limit: 250

The Berkshire Eagle

Email: letters@berkshireeagle.com

Word Limit: 400

The Enterprise (Brockton)

Email: letters@enterprisenews.com

Word Limit: 200

The Salem News

<u>www.salemnews.com/site/forms/online_servi</u>

ces/letter/ Word Limit: 250

The MetroWest Daily News

Email: mdnletters@wickedlocal.com

Word Limit: 400

The Daily Item (Lynn)

Email: letterstoeditor@itemlive.com

Word Limit: 250

Daily Hampshire Gazette

Email: opinion@gazettenet.com

Word Limit: 350

Sentinel & Enterprise (Fitchburg)

letters@sentinelandenterprise.com

Word Limit: 250

The Sun Chronicle (Attleboro)

www.thesunchronicle.com/site/forms/online

<u>services/letter/</u>
Word Limit: 250

The Milford Daily News

Email: mdnletters@wickedlocal.com

Word Limit: 400

Greenfield Recorder

Email: letters@recorder.com

Word Limit: 300

Gloucester Daily Times

www.gloucestertimes.com/site/forms/online

services/letter/ Word Limit: 250

STEP 3: POST TO SOCIAL MEDIA

It is going to take community support to create healthy changes for Massachusetts. Fortunately, social media allows you to share your message with a wider audience than traditional door-to-door grassroots work can.

With a few clicks, you can access the right people at the right moment, making them aware of the issue and garnering their support. The following tips will help you do just that: get your message online to create an even bigger groundswell of support for the cause.



Tag Your Lawmakers

Most state representatives and senators have a social media presence, which can be an effective venue for them to hear from advocates. In order to ensure lawmakers see your social media posts, make sure to tag them. Remember, a social media post is only effective if the person you are trying to influence sees it.

Tag the American Heart Association, too

The American Heart Association would like to share your posts to help them reach a wider audience. To ensure we see it, tag us, as well. Our username on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram is @AmericanHeartMA.

Use Images and Video

Posts with multimedia, such as videos and images, drive higher engagement rates and increase reach. People are more likely to click posts with images and videos.

If you have access to a smartphone, consider creating a short video explaining your support for the sugary drinks tax.

Stories of real-life advocates can be one of the most effective measures for swaying decision makers, because they represent actual constituents' opinions on the policies they care about.

You can greatly improve smartphone video with a few simple steps:

- Hold your smartphone horizontally, when possible
- Shoot in brightly lit areas
- Try for the best audio possible
- Keep your video under 60 seconds long

SOCIAL MEDIA USERNAMES

When you post to social media, make sure to tag your local lawmakers so they see your posts. To make things easy for you, we've provided the Twitter and Facebook usernames for every member of the Massachusetts Legislature.



If your lawmaker is on Instagram, feel free to post there, too. Just make sure your account's privacy settings are set to "public."



Besides your local lawmakers, we recommend tagging Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Ronald Mariano. Remember to also tag the American Heart Association (@AmericanHeartMA), so that we can share your posts.



Massachusetts House of Representatives

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Joseph Boncore @joeboncore
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Patrick O'Connor @PatrickMOConnor @SenatorOConnor

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- @SenJohnVelis



Sample Social Media Messaging

The harmful health effects of sugary drinks are clear. A tax based on sugar content in Massachusetts could reduce sugar consumption by 25%.

Sugary drinks are a major contributor to heart disease and diabetes. A sugary drink tax in Massachusetts could put a healthier future within reach for our entire state.

Research shows just ONE sugary drink per day increases our likelihood of cardiovascular disease. It's time to pass a sugary drink tax in Massachusetts.

https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/05/13/e ven-1-sugary-drink-a-day-could-boostheart-disease-stroke-risk-in-women

Revenue from a sugary drink tax in Massachusetts could raise at least \$300 million for nutrition programs serving low-income communities, access to clean drinking water in public schools, and community hospitals.

Taxes on sugary drinks could help prevent heart attacks, strokes and diabetes while also lowering health care costs, according to Boston researchers.

https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/06/22/t axing-sugary-drinks-could-boost-health-reduce-care-costs



THANK YOU!

