



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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(347) 396-4177

**STATEMENTS FROM HEALTH COMMISSIONER MARY T. BASSETT AND SUPPORTERS
OF NEW YORK CITY'S SUGARY DRINK PORTION RULE**

Statement from Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH, New York City Health Commissioner:

“The link between sugary drinks and obesity is no longer in question. What we do need to question is the beverage industry's continued promotion of these unhealthy products in communities most burdened by obesity and diabetes. The rule capping sugary drinks at 16 ounces is a necessary and important step toward improving the health of New Yorkers regardless of their zip code. We are confident the rule will be upheld and that New York City will continue to innovate and work to protect all New Yorkers from the illnesses that threaten the health of our population.”

Statement from Steven M. Safyer, MD, President and CEO of Montefiore Health System:

“Montefiore is proud to support the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in its campaign against oversized sugar sweetened beverages which fuel the obesity epidemic in our country,” said Steven M. Safyer, M.D., president and CEO of Montefiore Health System. “Obesity has given rise to an increased prevalence of diabetes, heart disease and hypertension – all of which take an immeasurable toll on our society, our neighborhoods and our families. Highly processed sugar-based drinks and sodas provide no nutritional value, contribute directly to weight gain, and may even have an as-yet undiscovered negative impact on a person's health. At Montefiore, we are dedicated to fighting the obesity epidemic and have banned sugar-sweetened beverages and trans fats from all of our locations. This is the social justice issue of our time and we are committed to winning, for the Bronx and the country.”

Statement from Dr. Jane L. Delgado, President and CEO of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health:

“The beverage industry has pursued a strategy of legal obstruction and put profits over the health of its customers and I am confident that the Court of Appeals will rule in favor of the health of New Yorkers,” said Dr. Jane L. Delgado, President and CEO of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, the nation's leading advocate for Hispanic health. “We are proud to be on the right side of this issue for the health of all communities and families. The NYC Board of Health policy on sugar-sweetened beverages is a common sense approach to promote healthier environments for all New Yorkers and will serve as a model for the nation.”

Statement from Larry Hausner, CEO, American Diabetes Association:

“The American Diabetes Association is appreciative of New York City's initiative in limiting the size of sugar-sweetened beverages sold. This policy is complementary with the work done by ADA toward our

mission to prevent and cure diabetes, and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes,” according to CEO Larry Hausner of the American Diabetes Association.

“More than 1 million residents in Greater New York have been diagnosed with diabetes. ADA and the NYC Health Department are mutually committed in communicating the importance of healthy foods and beverages in daily dietary choices, coupled with an active lifestyle to combat the epidemic of diabetes, and fight against obesity.”

Statement from Harlem Children’s Zone:

“Obesity among children negatively impacts their quality of life, their health, and, in fact, can shorten their lives. The repercussions in poor neighborhoods are particularly troubling. Lacking the money and information to make healthier choices, poor families are consuming empty calories, particularly cheap, large containers of highly sweetened drinks. Buying these huge drinks is not the smart choice, so Mayor DeBlasio is absolutely right to protect our kids and families from the effects of these unnecessary and harmful beverage options.”

Statement from Larry Cohen, MSW, Founder and Executive Director, Prevention Institute

“Industry does not have carte blanche to sell products that make us ill. The soda size cap follows a long, proud history of using policy to protect health and individuals. Policies that regulate tobacco, seatbelts and lead in paint have successfully built on this same principle of consumer protection. Such laws were controversial when first introduced but now they’re a given. With evidence mounting that sugary beverages are detrimental to health, New York’s soda cap is a small step that would work toward a similar shift in norms.”

“Whether or not this specific policy in New York goes into effect, it is clear that business as usual is over for the food and beverage industry. Communities across the country are taking steps to reign in the excesses of companies that put profits over health. Every day there is news of a hospital or school that is kicking sugary drinks out of their vending machines or a city that wants to put an excise tax on soda to fund prevention.

Statement from Marice Ashe, CEO, ChangeLab Solutions:

“We need to use all the tools at our disposal to counter the obesity epidemic, and local government has a major role to play. New York City’s proposed cap on supersized sugary drinks is one way to give people the chance to decide how much they really want to consume, instead of letting industry make the call. It brings us closer to the norms of earlier decades, before obesity and diabetes rates began to skyrocket, when the average soda portion size was actually smaller than New York City’s proposed limit. Public officials are charged with protecting our health and welfare, and New York City is taking a perfectly appropriate step to meet that obligation.”

Statement from Public Health Solutions:

“Addressing the obesity epidemic is a public health necessity. To curb the epidemic, we must implement a variety of approaches and initiatives, starting in early childhood. Limiting portion size, especially for sugary drinks with no nutritional value, is an excellent place to begin. We have gone from happily accepting bottles of coke that were 6.5 fluid ounces to expecting “regular” drinks to be 32 ounces. Public

Health Solutions is doing our part to go “sugary drink free” and promotes healthy alternatives like NYC Tap Water to our clients, including our nearly 46,000 WIC participants, our staff and their families. New York City has been a national leader in the fight against obesity, especially among children – the City’s proposed portion cap rule will help to keep us on this path.”

Statement from Lynn Silver, MD, MPH, Senior Advisor, Chronic Disease and Obesity Prevention, Public Health Institute and California Project LEAN:

“The Public Health Institute (PHI) and PHI's California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition) applaud the courageous initiative of the City of New York to limit the portion size of sugary drinks in food service.

In the 1950s, a restaurant soda was just seven ounces, a bottle of soda only six—smaller than today’s ‘child size drink’ and miniscule compared to supersized drinks weighing in at 64 ounces. As Big Soda and fast food restaurants have increased the portion sizes of sugary drinks, consumption has also increased.

The science linking sugary drinks to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and tooth decay is incontrovertible. Heart disease and diabetes are not rare conditions; they are two of the leading causes of death. Yet sugar-loaded beverages continue to be among the most heavily marketed products in the nation, including aggressive marketing directed at our children, where ‘adult-onset diabetes’ has become a childhood disease. Exploding portion sizes, coupled with ubiquitous placement and aggressive marketing, have made sugary drinks the largest single component of the growth in caloric intake of Americans over recent decades, though they offer zero nutritional value.

Contrary to what multi-million dollar advertising campaigns purport, drinking these products regularly will not make you happy. Instead, it can land you in the hospital. It’s time to reduce portion sizes to better match what science shows: too much sugar is bad for health. We strongly encourage the New York State courts to recognize the importance of this measure to the public’s health, and the clear validity of using the health code to address it. Boards of Health have acted to prevent disease from food for over 100 years. We must support them in their efforts to address the large-scale illness caused by dangerously swollen soda sizes.”

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