



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.2210 AND S.1396
AN ACT TO PROTECT YOUTH FROM THE HEALTH RISK OF SUGARY DRINKS
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
JUNE 21, 2023**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in support of H.2210 and S.1396, *An Act to Protect Youth From The Health Risk Of Sugary Drinks*.

The MMS is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. As part of a healthy approach to childhood nutrition, the Medical Society supports limiting children's intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and overall added sugar, given their minimal nutritional value and well-documented harmful health effects.

As such, MMS supports H.2210 and S.1396, identical bills that would:

- Prohibit marketing of sugary drinks in schools;
- Require labels on certain sugary drink advertisements warning that drinking sugary beverages contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay; and
- Impose limitations on sugary beverages in children's meals at chain restaurants by making healthier choices the default beverage.

According to the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#), more than half of adults and 1 in 4 high school and middle school students in Massachusetts are overweight or obese, and over \$3.5 billion of medical expenses in Massachusetts are due to obesity. This bill is a significant step towards reducing that number by targeting the most vulnerable population – children.

The harmful effects of sugary beverages, especially for children, is well documented. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) notes that sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, and sports and energy drinks, were the top source of added sugars providing 21.3 percent. Children who have obesity are at higher risk of having obesity as adults. School is an ideal setting for children to learn and practice healthy eating. A child's risk of becoming obese increases by 60% with each additional sugary beverage consumed daily. Children who drink carbonated sugary beverages have almost double the risk of dental cavities. Drinking just one 20-ounce bottle of a sugary beverage per day can result in gaining 25 extra pounds per year.

It is also well-documented that the harmful health effects of sugary drinks disproportionately impact children from low-income communities and children of color. Such marginalized populations are more likely to have limited access to healthy beverages, more inclined to consume sugary beverages, and more affected by preventable chronic diseases. More disturbing is the fact that food and beverage companies disproportionately target marketing efforts promoting sugary drinks toward people of color. Reducing sugar intake in children, as one part of a healthy eating plan, will have the long term benefit of reducing the risk of preventable chronic diseases in that population in the future, thus, improving health outcomes and reducing cost.

The MMS believes this legislation promotes an important public health measure and urges the Committee on Public Health to report H.2210 and S.1396 out of Committee favorably.