



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 768

Resolution calling upon the United States Department of Agriculture to authorize New York City to add certain sugary drinks to the list of prohibited goods for City residents who receive Food Stamp assistance.

By Council Members Vallone and Koo

Whereas, According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Commissioner Thomas Farley and the late New York State Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, medical researchers have increasingly associated the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages with weight gain, obesity, and the development of diabetes and in the City of New York, diabetes is already an epidemic; and

Whereas, Dating back to President Kennedy's efforts in 1961, the aim of the USDA's Food Stamp Program, now technically called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), was "to provide for improved levels of nutrition among low-income households;" and

Whereas, The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 reinforced this goal, declaring it to be "the policy of Congress, in order to promote the general welfare, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's population by raising levels of nutrition among low-income households;" and

Whereas, New York City and New York State are seeking permission from the USDA to modify the list of allowable food items that can be purchased with SNAP benefits in New York City, to bar the purchase of certain sugary drinks with Food Stamps; and

Whereas, This provision would not apply to milk, milk substitutes, or fruit juices with no added sugar; and

Whereas, According to Commissioners Farley and Daines, some 57 percent of adults in New York City and 40 percent of children in New York City public schools are overweight or obese, with the numbers being

especially high in low-income neighborhoods; and

Whereas, The DOHMH further advises that in the past 10 years, the number of people with diabetes in NYC has more than doubled; and

Whereas, DOHMH reports that although an estimated 530,000 adult New Yorkers know they have diabetes, for every two people who have diabetes, there is another person who has it and doesn't yet know it, suggesting that there are likely another 265,000 New Yorkers with diabetes; and

Whereas, According to Dr. Leonid Poretsky, Division Chief of New York's Beth Israel Medical Center Division of Endocrinology, and other health experts, the diabetes epidemic is sweeping the modern world, affecting close to 246 million people world-wide, including 23.6 million in the United States, and some 500,000 to 800,000 New Yorkers; and

Whereas, According to research presented in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, many studies have attributed the rising rates of obesity and diabetes to increased caloric consumption, much of which comes from sweetened beverages; and

Whereas, The USDA has already set a precedent for defining sweetened beverages as a food with "minimal nutritional value" in their National School Lunch guidelines, and accordingly a USDA denial of the City and State's request would be in contradiction to its own explicitly stated and implemented policy in the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs; and

Whereas, National organizations that have supported measures to reduce our overall sugar consumption include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, Save the Children, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials; and

Whereas, By reducing access to sweetened beverages, the City's proposal is consistent with the City of New York's comprehensive efforts to improve the nutrition of all New Yorkers, including low-income households; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City Of New York calls upon the United States Department of

Agriculture to authorize New York City to add certain sugary drinks to the list of prohibited goods for City residents who receive Food Stamp assistance.

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