



DISCONTINUE SALE OF COMPETITIVE FOODS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

SUMMARY:

Added sugar in food leads to chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and depression, as well as behavioral problems for children, especially elementary age children. The nationally subsidized school breakfast and lunch can already exceed the American Heart Association recommended limit of 12-25 grams of sugar (3-6 teaspoons) per day for children (depending on age).

As a result of inadequate funding, even with federal subsidies for the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs, many schools and school districts sell competitive foods to cover the cost of operating a school nutrition program. Virginia Code § 22.1-207.4 defines competitive foods as any food, excluding beverages, sold to students on school grounds during regular school hours that is not part of the school breakfast or school lunch program. Most of the competitive foods are high in added sugar and refined carbohydrates. The availability of competitive foods can result in students selecting to eat competitive foods rather than the school meal and also increases the stigma associated with the inability to pay for school meals which further exacerbates the inequities children face.

WHEREAS, the intake of sugar by children is directly related to the prevalence of obesity – 13.9% among 2- to 5-year-olds, 18.4% among 6- to 11-year-olds, and 20.6% among 12- to 19-year-olds – the increasing prevalence of cardiovascular disease, 1 in 5 adolescents are pre-diabetic, and elementary school aged-children are more sedentary overall than in previous decades; and

WHEREAS, children consume on average 80 grams of added sugar per day while the American Heart Association guidelines stipulate that for children ages 2-18, they should eat no more than *12-25 grams* of sugar per day, (depending on age); and

WHEREAS, children's daily exposure to foods high in added sugar and/or refined carbohydrates contained in the nationally subsidized school breakfast and lunch could already exceed the American Heart Association guidelines; and

WHEREAS, foods high in added sugar and/or refined carbohydrates, and foods containing additives, affect the ability of children to concentrate on their studies and perform well in the classroom; and

WHEREAS, children are not developmentally able to self-regulate their sugar intake without direct and individual oversight by parents or teachers; and

WHEREAS, students are able to purchase *multiple* competitive foods that are high in added sugar and/or refined carbohydrates to accompany each school lunch; and

WHEREAS, children from families with low incomes are less able to access healthy foods at home and rely on the school lunch as a primary source of nutritious food, and additionally have unequal access to healthcare in relation to the effects of unhealthy foods they eat; and

WHEREAS, purchasing competitive foods depends upon a child's ability to pay for the competitive foods creating inequities between families who can pay for competitive foods and those who cannot; and

WHEREAS, some schools have already discontinued the sale of competitive foods and have seen an increase in students purchasing school lunches;

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Virginia PTA urges the Board of Education, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Health, to discontinue the practice of allowing competitive foods to be sold to students on school grounds during regular school hours.

January 25, 2020, Adopted by the Virginia PTA 2020 Annual Meeting Attendees