

Thank you Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and Honorable Members of the Economic Matters Committee for the opportunity to speak today

My name is Reed Wise and I am a Public Health student at Johns Hopkins as well as a medical student at Nova Southeastern University. Additionally, I have earned a Masters of Science in Physiology and Biophysics from Georgetown University. I speak today in strong support of House Bill 661.

I was fortunate to be able to speak in front of the Senate Finance Committee just a few weeks ago, today I am grateful to share my perspective with you so that we may do our best to provide the young people of our community here in Maryland the tools to succeed in all aspects of life. Children are profoundly impacted by the world around them, and as advocates and legislators, it is our duty to ensure that their environment is as conducive successful and healthy living as is possible in today's immensely complicated world. It has been well documented in the literature, including publications from the American Association of Pediatrics, that excessive consumption of sugary beverages is linked to childhood obesity and other worsening health outcomes such as tooth decay, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, fatty liver disease, and all-cause mortality among others (1). Importantly, throughout their development, young people develop the habits that they will carry throughout their youth as well as adulthood. While these habits will absolutely change somewhat throughout their lifetimes, fostering healthy habits early is a great way to ensure that our students have the tools to take charge of their fitness in a positive way. Don't get me wrong, I like to have a sugary drink as a treat every once in a while, but the switch to water and other unsweetened beverages as the default for children's meals will give all our students the healthiest option from day one, while still maintaining the freedom of choice for children and their families to enjoy a soda on occasion if they so desire. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to your committee.

I urge a favorable report on HB 661.

(1) <https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/14112>