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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Long Beach Approves 'Healthy-by-Default' Kids' Beverage Ordinance

LONG BEACH, CALIF., OCTOBER 23, 2017 ... The city of Long Beach committed to an ordinance last Tuesday night requiring either water, milk or 100 percent juice up to 40 calories per serving to be the default beverage in children's combo meals, becoming the fifth and largest city in the state to do so. The so-called "healthy-by-default" rule, passed unanimously by the Long Beach City Council, aims to tackle the city's skyrocketing childhood obesity rate and worsening type 2 diabetes epidemic.

Public Health Advocates worked with the Long Beach City Council and community members and organizations to build momentum for this policy change.

"We're happy to see the city of Long Beach, one of the largest cities in the state, join Davis, Stockton, Perris and Berkeley in adopting this policy and make this commitment to better serve kids," says Alfred Mata Jr., program manager at Public Health Advocates. "I hope this success in Long Beach sends a message to other cities in the region and throughout the state that this sort of change is possible and the right thing to do for our children's health."

Long Beach Councilmember Jeannine Pearce was the main sponsor for the ordinance. "Our lives are busy, and more and more we're grabbing a meal on the run or eating out. That's why it's so important that restaurants offer healthy default beverage options—especially for children," she said.

In the upcoming months, restaurants that serve meals aimed at children will be required to provide milk, non-dairy milk, water, sparkling water or 100 percent juice up to 40 calories per serving as the default beverage option. Customers will still be able to purchase sodas and other sugary drinks on request. The ordinance will be enforced with administrative citations by the Long Beach Health Department.

"The goal is to help kids see these healthy options as the norm, not the exception," said Vice Mayor Rex Richardson. "Instead of getting a sugary drink without asking for one – and being forced to negotiate with their child – parents will be given the opportunity to start the meal off right with a healthy beverage first."

Various studies have linked a daily sugary drink habit to a 26 percent higher risk of type 2 diabetes and a 55 percent greater risk of childhood obesity, as well as higher incidences of heart disease, liver disease and metabolic disorder.

Today, 55 percent of California adults have prediabetes or diabetes, while 69 percent are overweight and at a higher risk of developing diabetes in the future. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one-in-three children born today will have diabetes by 2050.

"I am proud to be part of a team that makes it a priority to address health impacts for our future generations through partnerships with a focus on policy and planning," said Health and Human Services

Director Kelly Colopy. “For many years, we’ve recognized the impact of sugary drinks on health. The “healthy-by-default” beverage makes it easier for parents to provide a healthy beverage for their kids and gives us an opportunity to engage restaurants, community groups and the public around the importance of offering healthy beverage options to young children. It’s a step in the right direction.”

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Public Health Advocates (PHAdvocates) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization at the forefront of solving the obesity and diabetes epidemics by advocating for groundbreaking policies that build a healthier California. PHAdvocates played a leading role in removing soda and junk food from public schools, passing California’s landmark restaurant menu labeling law and advocating for a statewide soda warning label law. For more information visit: www.phadvocates.org.