

# public citizens for children + youth

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Statement by Donna Cooper, Executive Director of PCCY, On the Council President Alternative Options on the Soda Tax**

The misleading advertising campaign perpetrated by Big Soda has claimed victims among Philadelphia City Council. At a time when many cities across the nation are pushing forward with soda taxes of their own, Philadelphia's proposed corporate tax has been hailed as a victory for advocates of children, families, health and equity. But now it would appear that some members of council are settling for less when we need to do more.

The majority of Philadelphians favor a tax on sugary drinks and a recent Temple University survey showed 84% know that quality pre-k is important. Under the Mayor's proposal, quality pre-k would be expanded to 6,500 more children. With expected state funds that can mean as many as 10,000 more children get the smart start needed to ensure school success. The Mayor's strategy not only gives the poorest young children access to pre-k it wisely improve the community recreation centers, libraries and parks that serve as safe havens for the most at risk children in this city. The Council President's alternative options that expand pre-k to just 2,000 children is not an acceptable option.

This is especially true when you consider that the soda industry disproportionately targets their advertising at black and Hispanic children who don't 'choose' to be profoundly affected by them. As a result the rates of obesity and diabetes are highest for these kids. Thanks to a recent study by Harvard University, we know the proposed 3-cents/oz. corporate tax has the chance of preventing 2,300 cases of diabetes annually, 36,000 cases of obesity annually, and over a decade saving the lives of 730 Philadelphians, and avoiding an estimated \$197 million in health care costs.

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Given the growing public support and the proven benefits of the Mayor's plan for the poorest children in our city, we urge members of council to reject any alternatives that meet the needs of soda companies but undermine the future of our children.

This City Council, under the leadership of Council President Darrell Clark, has risen to the challenge of meeting the needs of children and the school district in the past with difficult tax increases. We urge them to rise to the challenge again.

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