

November 6, 2017

Honorable Mayor Sylvester and Daly City Councilmembers
333 90th Street
Daly City, CA 94015

RE: Support for Healthy by Default Ordinance

Dear Mayor Sylvester and Council Members:

As a Pediatrician serving the children of San Mateo County and a provider in the San Mateo County Health System, I strongly urge you to support the Healthy by Default Ordinance. This policy would make the healthy choice easier for our families by adding language to the municipal code that would require restaurants to replace sugary beverages with healthier options such as water and low-fat milk as the default offered with children's meals. Other beverages would remain available but only upon request.

According to the 2014 California Health Interview Survey, 22.3% of children in Daly City between the ages of 2 and 11 are overweight or obese for their age –putting them at an increased risk for serious health problems in adulthood, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma and cancer. As a provider in our clinics, I don't just see the numbers, I see my overweight and obese patients suffering from high cholesterol, high blood pressure, asthma exacerbations and struggling to keep up with their peers. Furthermore, the racial, ethnic and income-based disparities in obesity rates are mirrored by each group's sugary drink consumption. For example, African-Americans and Latinos report consuming more sugary drink calories than white.

Restaurants play a central role in the American diet as Americans are increasingly consuming more food away from home. Children now consume about 20 percent of their daily calories at fast-food establishments and full-service restaurants. Children and teens that eat at restaurants drink more soda and less milk than those who eat at home. While my earnest efforts to counsel my patients and their families to make healthier choices when eating outside the home may help, I am limited by the number of patients I can see. An ordinance such as this could have such a far reaching effect, supporting the entire community.

Many of the families I serve are dealing with tenuous housing situations and food scarcity, forcing the family to eat out of the home more often than the parents would like. Requiring restaurants to offer healthier beverages is an effective way to improve the nutritional quality of children's meals, while also making it easier for parents to choose a healthy beverage for their children.

I strongly urge the passage of the Healthy by Default Ordinance. It is a common sense measure to support parents' efforts to protect their children's health. With the adoption of a Healthy by Default Ordinance, the City of Daly City will be at the forefront of San Mateo County's efforts to support the well-being of our Daly City youth and promote health equity throughout the County.

Sincerely,