Healthy Eating Active Living Act Reintroduced in Illinois
Bill Estimated to Raise More Than $600 Million for Health, Wellness in State

Springfield, Ill – Feb. 19, 2015 - Today Sen. Mattie Hunter (D- 3rd District) and Rep. Robyn Gabel (D- 18th District) introduced the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Act [SB 1584 and HB 2667] to provide tools and resources for Illinois families to live healthier lives. The bill is expected to generate more than $600 million dollars a year for investment in communities across the state through a small tax on sugary drink distributors. Sugary drinks are the number one source of added sugar in the American diet and have unique and proven health hazards.

“This is an important piece of legislation for the health of Illinois communities, especially those most devastated by sky-high rates of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease,” Sen. Hunter said. “African Americans have the highest heart disease mortality rates in the state and Latinos are twice as likely to develop diabetes as Caucasian Americans. Across Illinois, low-income communities of all types face great barriers to being healthy. The HEAL Act provides communities with tools that help children and families live healthier lives by increasing access to more affordable fruits and vegetables, creating safe and accessible opportunities for physical activity and implementing other evidence-based measures to promote health.”

The HEAL Act places a penny-per-ounce excise tax on high-sugar beverages (those with more than 5 grams of sugar per 12 ounces) and uses the revenues to invest in expanded opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. This includes more nutrition and physical education in schools, more affordable and accessible foods at farmers markets, and more bike lanes and sidewalks for residents to be active. “Obesity and chronic disease prevention requires a multi-pronged approach, so we are excited to support the HEAL Act as an opportunity to invest in the interventions we know work in communities,” said Elissa Bassler, CEO of the Illinois Public Health Institute and executive director of the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity.

“This bill also helps expand prevention services in Medicaid,” said Rep. Gabel said. “Obesity-related health care costs Illinois taxpayers more than $6 billion a year. This legislation will help prevent those costly chronic conditions and reduce the economic drag they cause, while also improving the quality of life for Illinois families.”
“A small tax on sugary drinks raises awareness of their harmful effects. It sends a strong message that sugary drinks are not healthful beverage choices. Furthermore, the money raised will be re-invested in Illinois communities in programs to prevent diabetes and heart disease,” said Dr. Goutham Rao, Chair of the American Heart Association’s Obesity Committee and Vice Chair of Family Medicine at NorthShore University Health System.

The next step is for the bill to be considered by committees in the Illinois House of Representatives and Senate. The bill is supported by more than 25 organizations, including the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and the Illinois African American Coalition for Prevention. A full list of supporters can be found on the proposal fact sheet.


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The primary goal of the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity is to ensure that trends in obesity in Illinois are stable in 2015 and moving downward by 2018. The statewide coalition of over 140 organizations works to implement solutions to the obesity epidemic through coordinated and comprehensive policy, systems, and environmental changes.