



**Testimony of Sugar Free Kids Maryland  
Shawn McIntosh, Executive Director  
Montgomery County Council  
Bill 1-22, Eating and Drinking Establishments – Healthy Meals for  
Children  
February 1, 2022  
Position: Support**

Sugar Free Kids Maryland strongly supports Bill 1-22 to improve the health of Montgomery County children by promoting nutritious drink and food options at county restaurants. As a coalition of nearly 250 member organizations committed to the reduction of sugar consumption in order to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease, tooth decay and unhealthy weight in children and families, Sugar Free Kids Maryland recognizes the important role healthier restaurant kids' meals can play in reinforcing healthy eating habits.

Montgomery County children are experiencing far too many health problems before they enter adulthood. 20% of Montgomery County high school students are either overweight or obese. Children who are unable to maintain a healthy weight also experience chronic illnesses such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes at young ages. These conditions, without action, hold dire consequences for the entire generation. The habits they build as young people determine their health outcome as adults.

Overconsumption of sugary drinks and unhealthy foods is a health equity issue. Blacks, Latinos, American Indians and people of color disproportionately experience nutrition-related chronic diseases. These inequities are even more pressing in the era of COVID-19, as we see the virus taking a disproportionate toll on populations with a high burden of chronic disease. (Public Health Law Center, 2020)

Bill 1-22 will make water, milk, sparkling water and sweetener-free flavored water the default beverage options for all restaurant kids' meals in the county and will require at least one full meal to limit calories, fat, salt and sugar. The bill will improve health for children by making it easier for kids and their families to make the healthy choice when eating out. The bill could be strengthened by requiring 2 healthy meals on kids' meal menus.

Sugar Free Kids Maryland urges the Council to support Bill 1-22 to put Montgomery County children on the right path to developing healthy lifestyles. In doing so, you will lead the nation in making sure that children have access to both healthy food and drink options when eating out.