

March 9, 2021

Representative Mike Freiberg
Chair
Preventative Health Policy Division
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN

Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

Our names are Raja Samlali and Hassan Ziadi and we are the owners/operators of the Moroccan Flavors restaurant at Midtown Global Market in Minneapolis. We have been partners with the Cultural Wellness Center and the Minneapolis Health Department in helping people to reTHINK their Drink here at the Midtown Global Market, a 'Healthy Beverage Zone', now for 5 years. The Midtown Global Market has had more than 12 restaurants who have supported this effort throughout the 5 years. COVID-19 has left the Market and the restaurants who have partnered alongside of me, rethinking, and refocusing during this time to catering and meal packets. I am still here and still holding solidly to maintaining the Market as a Healthy Beverage Zone. I am happy to be the champion and support this bill. We submit this letter to you to express our support for proposed legislation that would require healthy drinks to be the default beverage for children's meals. We are also supportive of the legislation's requirement that a healthy default side serving also be provided as part of a children's meal.

The vast majority of restaurants have milk and water available, which means that making those items the default beverages as part of a children's meal would not be that difficult. As business owners we are appreciative of the fact that this legislation does not ban things like pop or sugary drinks such as chocolate milk. If parents want to order items like that for their children, they still have the right to.

As you are aware, and as I stated above restaurants throughout Minnesota have faced a challenging time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our restaurant has also experienced challenges. That is why I also appreciate the fact that this legislation would be phased in over time—that the default healthy drink requirement would not go into effect for over a year, and that the default healthy side serving would not go into effect for several years after that. That time frame would provide restaurants with ample opportunity to prepare for the changes by updating their menus, educating employees, and ordering the necessary products.

As restaurant owners/operators we are proud of the business that we have built and the service that we provide to the public. We recognize that we play an important role in the greater community. That is why we are supportive of this healthy children's meal legislation and what it will do to help support the health of children in our community.

If you have questions, please feel free to email me at moroccanflavorsmpls@gmail.com or rajaasamlali7@gmail.com or Raja at 651-410-0361 or Hassan at 612-404-4037.

Thank you.