



March 10, 2021

Dear Chair Freiberg and members of the House Preventive Health Policy Division,

I am writing on behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA) in support of HF1307, legislation that would make healthier food and drinks the default options on restaurant kids' meal menus while preserving parental choice.

Sugary drinks, which are often served automatically with kids' meals, are the leading source of added sugar in the American diet. The AHA recommends that children have no more than one 8-ounce sugary drink a week, but the average child today consumes as much as 10 times that amount. That adds up to more than 30 gallons of sugary drinks every year - enough to fill a bathtub.

If we do not reduce these trends, 40 percent of children will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime, which makes them twice as likely to develop and die from cardiovascular diseases as adults. Sugary drinks are also a major contributor to other diet-related chronic diseases and tooth decay, which add to our state's healthcare costs. In 2017, diabetes alone cost our Minnesota an estimated \$4.7 billion dollars in increased medical care and lost productivity. These expenses are unsustainable.

The restaurant setting provides a unique opportunity to reduce sugary drink consumption. Making water and unflavored milk the default beverage options, along with healthier default sides for kids' meals, while preserving parental choice, is a small change that would have a powerful and positive impact on consumers' choices. It will promote health by supporting families who want to make healthier choices for their children, and brings the additional benefit of supporting our dairy farmers by strengthening market opportunities. Its lengthy, phased-in approach would provide restaurants, including those that have been impacted by the pandemic, the opportunity to update their menus and allow their business to regain a stable footing prior to it going into effect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jess Nolan", written over a horizontal line.

Jess Nolan
Government Relations Director
Jess.nolan@heart.org