



# children's defense fund ohio

Good morning Chairperson Tyson and Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Katherine Ungar and I am a Policy Associate with the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. I am honored to provide testimony in support of the healthy default beverage ordinance for our city.

CDF-Ohio is a statewide non-profit organization, based in Columbus, which serves as an independent voice for the wellbeing of our children. Our mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. We work to champion policies and programs that address the needs of the "whole child", by supporting programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, ensure quality education, and provide children the opportunity to access resources to meet their health and nutrition needs.

The first step in improving our health outcomes is to provide healthy options. This ordinance is about doing just that, providing children with healthier options. It's also about chronic disease prevention.

According to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio's 2019 Health Value [Dashboard](#), Ohio ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation in health value. Many causes of illness, disability and death are [preventable](#), and researchers find that improvements in health knowledge and behaviors, such as improved nutrition, would go a long way in improving health outcomes.

The Ohio Department of Health, [2016 Early Childhood Data Brief](#) demonstrates the significant impact of childhood overweight and obesity on not only our children's health, but also our economy. More than [one-third](#) of Head Start students were classified as overweight or obese and more than 40% of obese students were classified as severely obese. Childhood obesity remains a source of significant and persistent disparities. According to a report, the [State of Childhood Obesity](#), obesity is a risk factor for chronic illnesses such as diabetes. In 2010, over 1 million Ohioans had diabetes and based on our current rates of obesity the project cases are expected to increase by over 50% in the next decade (to over 1.5M). It is critically important to teach and guide our children about how to make healthy and safe decisions.

Support healthy children. This ordinance will not prevent restaurants from serving soda to children, but simply provide the tool to effectively guide and teach children to make healthier decisions. Healthy habits lead to flourishing lives. We must value making health actionable for our children. Passage of this ordinance demonstrates to Columbus children that you value their growth, both physically and mentally. I am happy to answer any questions and appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today.