



Statement from Yael Lehmann, Executive Director of The Food Trust, on the Passing of the Philadelphia Soda Tax Philadelphia, PA (June 17, 2016)

The Philadelphia soda tax will not only be a means to pay for universal pre-K, an investment in our children which could help lift an entire generation out of poverty, but is also part of a comprehensive strategy to curb the consumption of sugary drinks, ultimately helping reverse our city's obesity and diabetes epidemic. Mayor Kenney and City Council should be applauded for taking this bold step to improve the health and well-being of Philadelphians, especially our children.

With the passing of this tax, Philadelphia is on the front lines in the battle against urban poverty and diet-related disease - and the rest of the nation is watching. Since we have their attention, it should be noted that the soda tax will serve as a part of a comprehensive approach to decrease the consumption of soda and increase access and consumption of water. Here are some other important elements of that approach:

- In addition to the passage of the soda tax, City Council has also approved a new measure to create a tax credit of up to \$2,000 for merchants who sell healthy beverages in their stores, which will incentivize small business owners to move toward selling healthier options.
- Since 2004, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, a partnership between the Philadelphia Department of Health and The Food Trust, has helped increase the offering of healthy foods and beverages in over 450 corner stores throughout the city.
- Also in 2004, Philadelphia became the second major U.S. school district to end the sale of carbonated sodas in all school vending machines.
- For over a decade, Nutrition Educators from The Food Trust and other organizations have been working in schools to teach students about the hazards of sugary drinks as well as encourage students to make healthier choices and consume more water.
- In 2014, Philadelphia was the first to launch a city-wide effort under the Partnership for a Healthier America's Drink Up campaign. *Drink Up Philly* has partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department, the Philadelphia 76ers, corner store operators and other non-profit partners to encourage people to drink more water, more often.
- The School District of Philadelphia has recently committed \$1,000,000 to ensure three hydration stations per school. The School District has also developed a plan to increase drinking water access and appeal, which includes testing and outreach. Youth United for Change and Get HYPE Philly!'s Youth Leadership Council are also advocating for school wellness policies that allow students to carry refillable water bottles, and more.
- This fall, City Council will be voting on legislation calling to increase the number of working fountains to 1 per every 100 students, as well as efforts to ensure the quality and safety of school water in schools and daycare centers.

Philadelphia has a long history of collaboration between government, nonprofits, business and community partners to improve health and local economies. With such outstanding efforts, Philadelphia continues to be a national leader in public health. We would like to thank Mayor Kenney, City Council and all of the partner advocates who are working to dramatically change the lives of our children and make Philadelphia a healthier place for all.