



February 23, 2024

The Honorable Mayor Johnston and Denver City Council
City of Denver
1437 Bannock St.
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

We are writing a letter of support for a local ordinance that makes a beverage option like water or unflavored milk (including a non-dairy substitute) the standard in kids' meal menus across the City of Denver.

Community members' lives are busy, and increasingly, families are grabbing a meal on the go. In fact, Americans now spend more of their food budget on foods prepared away from home than on foods at home. Therefore, what kids eat at restaurants matters now more than ever. The added sugar in sugary drinks typically offered with a kids' meal exceeds the recommended amount of sugar a child should have in an entire day. Sugary drink consumption increases the risk of type II diabetes, tooth decay, cancer, and heart disease. Additionally, the disproportionate marketing of sugary drinks to children of color drives higher consumption of sugary drinks, creating roadblocks to health equity. This ordinance removes the marketing of sugary drinks on kids' meal menus and supports kids and families with making life-long healthier choices.

The Southwest Food Coalition is inclusive of dozens of agencies and groups who work to address food justice and hunger needs in our communities. We take action "to address food insecurity and food sovereignty at a hyper local level with support from regional partners." Thus, as health-equity champions, an ordinance that prioritizes children's health and eliminates the marketing of unhealthy beverages at Denver restaurants is near and dear to our hearts. Together, we can help make healthy choices easier for families while they dine out. This can have an amazing impact on children's long-term health. We are constantly looking to innovate in ways that protect the well-being of our community and ensure a bright future for our children. That is why we support a policy to create healthier default beverage choices for kids' meals in Denver.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important and timely measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Knoblock".

Ken Knoblock

Leader, Southwest Food Coalition

ken@lifespanlocal.org

303-549-9410