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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Soda Warning Label Bill Falls Short in California, Moves Forward in New York

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., APRIL 29, 2015 ... SB 203, the Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Safety Warning Act, fell short in the California State Senate Health Committee this afternoon in a 4-1-4 (yes-no-abstain) vote. The bill would have helped curb skyrocketing diabetes rates by printing a simple warning label on the front of all bottles and cans of sugary drinks sold in the state. On Tuesday, a New York State Assembly bill modeled after California's legislation, A.2320, passed the Assembly Consumer Affairs and Protection Committee.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Monning (D-Carmel), in partnership with health advocates, community groups, physicians and the health care industry, introduced the bill to ensure that all Californians are aware of the harmful effects of consuming these drinks. The label, developed by a national panel of nutrition and public health experts, would have read: ***STATE OF CALIFORNIA SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay.***

"While I am disappointed about the outcome of SB 203, this will not deter me from my fight against the leading contributor of diabetes and other chronic illnesses," stated Senator Monning. "The scientific evidence of the proven adverse health impacts of sugar-sweetened beverages demands a health warning label, and it is only a matter of time before California enacts legislation that informs individuals about healthful beverage choices."

Four senators voted in support of SB 203:

- Bill Monning (D-Carmel)
- Richard Pan (D-Sacramento)
- Holly J. Mitchell (D-Los Angeles)
- Lois Wolk (D-Davis)

One senator voted against the bill:

- Jim Nielsen (R-Gerber)

Showing the powerful influence of the beverage industry, four senators decided not to take a position on the bill:

- Health Committee Chair, Senator Ed Hernandez (D-West Covina)
- Richard D. Roth (D-Riverside)
- Isadore Hall (D-Compton)
- Janet Nguyen (R - Garden Grove).

"People may know that sugary drinks aren't good for you, but most people do not know the profoundly harmful end results of consuming liquid sugar, which include type II diabetes and other metabolic disorders," said Dr.

Harold Goldstein of the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, a sponsor of SB 203. “Warning labels offer consumers the information that they have a right to know, in a simple, straightforward and transparent manner.”

An overwhelming body of scientific research shows that liquid sugar is uniquely harmful because it gets absorbed so quickly, much faster than solid food. When sugar floods the bloodstream, it overloads the pancreas and causes the liver to store much of the sugar as fat – which leads to fatty liver disease. Both of these conditions contribute directly to diabetes – a disease that has tripled in the U.S. over the last 30 years. Research shows that drinking a soda or two a day increases the risk of developing diabetes by 26 percent. In California, two-thirds of teenagers drink a soda or more a day, a higher proportion than ever before.

Warning label legislation, known as SB 1000 in 2014, originally passed the California State Senate but did not pass in the State Assembly’s Health Committee due to strong beverage industry opposition. According to a recent Field Poll, 74 percent of California voters, including a majority of Republicans and Independents, support warning labels on sugary drinks.

“The beverage industry and their legion of lobbyists made it their top priority to kill warning labels and keep consumers from learning about the significant health implications associated with these sugary products. Nonetheless, what has begun in California will surely spread nationwide as New York moves forward to inform and protect their citizens,” said Dr. Goldstein. “How many more people need to get diabetes, and how many more legs need to be amputated, before we warn consumers about the harmful effects of liquid sugar?”

Complete information on SB 203, including fact sheets on the science linking sugary beverages to diabetes, obesity and tooth decay, is available at: www.sodawarninglabel.org.

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California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization at the forefront of solving the obesity and diabetes epidemics by advocating for groundbreaking policies that build a healthier California.

Health Officers Association of California (HOAC) represents the physician health officers in California’s city and county jurisdictions. They conduct special projects to advance the practice of public health in California, provide public health-focused Continuing Medical Education for physicians and provide technical expertise to the legislature on matters related to public health.

California Black Health Network (CBHN) is a statewide organization dedicated to improving the health status of the 2.2 million people of African descent in California. CBHN’s mission is to advocate for programs, regulations and policies that serve to eliminate health disparities disproportionately affecting the African-American community, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, AIDS, breast and prostate cancer.

Latino Health Access (LHA) is a nonprofit that assists in improving the quality of life and health of low-income, uninsured, underserved people through quality preventive services and educational programs, emphasizing full participation in decisions affecting health. LHA forges partnerships, engages and helps elevate the community’s voice, and advocates alongside the community and partners to achieve health equity for all.