

TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION

House Public Health Committee Written Testimony on the Committee Substitute to House Bill 217 by Rep. Carol Alvarado April 10, 2013

Good morning, Chair Kolkhorst and members of the committee. The Texas Public Health Coalition, which consists of more than 20 organizations dedicated to advancing core public health principles at the state and community levels, thanks Rep. Carol Alvarado for her interest and leadership in child nutrition. We would like to express our support for limiting certain beverages sold to students, as outlined in the committee substitute to House Bill 217.

Sugar-sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugars in the diet of adolescents in the United States. Added sugars mean added calories contributing to weight gain and obesity. In Texas, 4 million young people attend school for approximately six hours a day. Schools are in a unique position to help improve the health status of children and adolescents. We appreciate your commitment to ensuring the choices our children make at school are healthy. We know it's more expensive to treat an obese adult than provide primary preventive care for children.

We appreciate the intent of this bill and recognize Texas as a leader in school nutrition policy. In recent years, Texas policy has exceeded federal nutrition standards. In fact, some of the provisions of HB 217 are already in place in Texas. In some cases, state guidance is more specific than what is outlined in this legislation. For example, state nutrition policy allows for only certain portion sizes for beverages, including 100-percent vegetable or fruit juices.

In addition, Texas schools continue to implement Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requirements, such as increasing whole grain, fruit, and vegetable options, and shifting dairy offerings to low-fat options. We celebrate the fact that Texas schools are implementing federal rules and promoting healthy habits for our students at schools. We again would like to thank Representative Alvarado for her efforts to promote healthy eating among children.