

May 23, 2022

Dear Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors:

As a lifetime Contra Costa County resident, I write to you in support of the Healthy Options at Point of Sale initiative, and urge the county to adopt an ordinance that would make healthy options more accessible at food vending retailers in unincorporated Contra Costa County.

One of the most crucial components of this initiative sets minimum nutrition standards requiring that products sold at checkout aisles and stations have no more than 5g of added sugar and 200 mg of sodium. For years, the Surgeon General and medical experts have warned patients against the dangers of added sugar and sodium. According to the CDC and the American Heart Association, their intake puts people at risk for high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, and heart attacks. I want to live in a county that prioritizes the long term health of its residents. By drafting an ordinance with this stipulation, it clearly communicates that our county's retailers and supervisors care about the health of our community.

These standards not only help reduce health problems among adults; it encourages youth to make healthier choices. Research shows that youth will make healthier choices based on how foods and products are placed and displayed. Too often in grocery stores, I have seen parents struggle with their children as they beg for a bag of chips, cookies, or a candy bar at checkout. I too have been that child. As a single mother, my mom often felt guilty rejecting my requests for these snacks—because it was one of the few times she could tell me “yes.” By setting minimum nutrition standards for food items sold at checkout, it reassures parents that they are buying their child a healthy snack at the checkout aisle. This eliminates the guilt of purchasing an unhealthy snack and helps parents say “yes” to encourage their child's healthy eating habits.

Of high importance to me is the availability of condoms in food vending stores without clerk attendance. As a teenager growing up in this county, I was too embarrassed to ask for assistance when buying condoms. I know that many teens feel the same way I felt growing up, as well as adults! Stores are one of the few places we can safely access condoms, and keeping them locked away only prevents their usage and encourages riskier sex practices. Not using protection puts people at high risk of contracting various diseases including HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and herpes. Making condoms available without clerk assistance increases the chance that they will be purchased and used, in turn improving our county's health and rate of disease.

I appreciate the Board's time in reviewing my letter and the topic of Healthy Options at Point of Sale. I strongly encourage the Board to act on this issue in support of the health of our county's most wonderful residents.

Enthusiastically,

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