



PROVIDE FOR HEALTHY AND NUTRITIOUS SNACK OPTIONS IN SCHOOL VENDING MACHINES

Bill: A.6900

Sponsor: Assemblywoman Galef

NYSPAC Position: SUPPORT

The New York State Public Affairs Committee (NYSPAC) of the Junior League urges New York State Assembly and Senate members to support the passage of legislation A.6900, providing for the sale and availability of healthy foods and beverages sold in school vending machines and setting standards on their nutritional value.

According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), children consume 35-50% of their total daily caloric intake at school. Although healthy foods and beverages are available, the most commonly sold items outside of school meals are sugary drinks, cookies, chips, and snack cakes. The sale of these junk foods outside of school meals has been associated with childhood obesity rates soaring over the past thirty years. **There are now approximately 1 million children in New York State who are either obese, or at risk of becoming obese, due to poor eating and exercise habits.**

By developing a pattern of eating low-nutrition foods, children increase their risk of developing diet-related chronic problems not previously seen until adulthood, including type II diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, orthopedic problems, and elevated cholesterol levels. Associated psychological effects include low self-esteem, negative body image, and depression. This is an expensive problem; the New York State Comptroller estimated that obesity-related illnesses cost the State over **\$7 billion dollars a year to treat, of which \$302 million alone was spent on children.**

Research shows that healthy food contributes to cognitive health and overall better performance in school. While New York State has restrictions on when a child may purchase foods from school vending machines, the *absence of limits* on their *contents* allow schools to offer candy, high-fat, high-sodium, and high-sugar snacks and beverages that will only provide unnecessary weight gain and influence children to substitute snacks for proper meals. Selling foods with low and minimal nutritional value in vending machines sends the message to children that healthy eating is unimportant and undermines nutrition education in many schools. But, parents feel that nutritional health should be a school priority; according to **one national study, 90% agreed that healthier options should be available in vending machines and on school property.**

Resistance to legislation such as this has often stemmed from fears that revenue from the sale of healthy foods in lieu of junk food would decrease substantially, thereby hurting districts that have come to depend on competitive food money to supplement vital programs. However, **recent studies where schools have removed foods of minimal nutritional value and replaced them with healthier options actually show an increase in revenue and profits.**

By enacting state legislation to set nutritional requirements on foods and drinks sold in school vending machines, New York would be brought in line with new national standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture on school food pursuant to the recently enacted Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, and up to par with current laws in Connecticut and New Jersey. While NYSPAC supports the recent achievements made at the national level to regulate all food sold in schools that participate in the federal school lunch program and considers it a key element in improving children's overall well-being, legislation at the state level would further strengthen New York's commitment to keeping our children healthy.

On behalf of the more than 8,000 women represented by 18 Junior Leagues of New York, we urge the New York Assembly and Senate to **enact A.6900 mandating the provision of nutritious snack options in vending machines and on school grounds.**

For more information, please contact NYSPAC at info@jl-nyspac.org.

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