

Kenneth Hecht
29 Plaza Drive, Berkeley, CA 94705

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Dear San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force:

I write as an individual, with the experience gained from my continuing service as a member of Berkeley's Sugar Sweetened Beverage Product Panel of Experts (SSBPPE) Commission, to urge you not to merge or eliminate San Francisco's Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax Advisory Committee (SDDTAC).

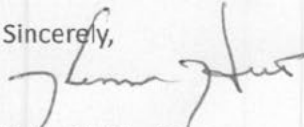
Berkeley's SBBPPE Commission was established in 2015 and implemented the first sugary drink tax in the nation. San Francisco's SDDTAC was established one year later and its design and goals benefited from Berkeley's experience. Thus, our experience in Berkeley seems quite relevant to San Francisco's.

Berkeley's sugary drink tax is working splendidly. Its success in decreasing soda consumption and increasing consumption of tap water, particularly in those neighborhoods most heavily impacted by sugary drinks, has been documented by rigorous study (e.g., Falbe J, et al. Implementation of the First US Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax in Berkeley, CA, 2015-2019. *Am J Public Health*. 2020 Sep;110(9):1429-1437).

In addition, a key feature of Berkeley's sugary drink tax is the SSBPPE Commission, which has taken seriously its pledge to voters to work to reduce disparities in health caused by consumption of sugary drinks and to ensure that tax revenues are focused on preventing unhealthy conditions caused by the consumption of sugary beverages. Approximately 40% of the tax monies are used to support school gardens and another 40% are used to strengthen community health infrastructure in impacted neighborhoods. The remaining funds are used to support other city policies to reduce soda consumption and to administer the program. This division of funds may be in part responsible for the tax's popularity: in 2024 over 80% of voters approved removal of the Berkeley tax's sunset provision, making Berkeley's tax permanent.

There seems to be a direct parallel to San Francisco's situation. Its advisory committee has been extremely diligent, volunteered countless hours, and succeeded in making solid, community health-strengthening grant recommendations. Much of this capacity is likely to be lost if the committee is merged with the Food Security Task Force (and certainly if it is simply eliminated), thus diluting much of the committee's expertise, passion, and authenticity in the eyes of the voters. If the committee remains independent, San Francisco's tax revenues, as focused by the commission, will continue making an invaluable contribution to the public health effort to combat diabetes, obesity and other adverse consequences of sugary drinks.

Thank you for consideration of my strong opposition to merging or eliminating the SDDTAC.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Hecht