The Honorable Bill Monning
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0027

RE: AB 669 (Monning) Sugar Sweetened Beverages Tax – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Monning:

First 5 LA is pleased to support AB 669, a measure that would fund childhood obesity prevention programs through a small tax on the added sugar in sodas and other sugary drinks. At a rate of a penny per fluid ounce, AB 669 will raise $1.7 billion a year to help local schools and communities implement effective strategies to keep our children active and healthy.

First 5 LA, a child advocacy and public grant making organization, was created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues to improve the lives of children from prenatal through age five in Los Angeles County. We recognize the importance of preventing young children from drinking sodas and other sugar sweetened beverages. In fact, increasing access to healthy foods and beverages is one of the top ten goals of the First Five L.A. Public Policy Agenda (enclosed).

Childhood obesity has become an epidemic in the United States and is the primary cause of type 2 diabetes and other long-term health problems. Since 1980, the number of obese children in the United States has more than tripled, and obesity now rivals smoking as the largest cause of preventable death and disease. If the current obesity trends are not reversed, it is predicted that one in three children—and nearly half of Latino and African American children—born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime.

In the last 30 years, the average American's daily caloric intake has increased by nearly 300 calories and 43 percent of those additional calories come from additional soda consumption. Where soda was once a special treat, it has now become a part of our children's daily diets. Last year a study released by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found that 41 percent of children ages 2-11 and 62 percent of adolescents ages 12-17 consume at least one soda or other sugar-sweetened beverage every day, even though a child's risk of obesity increases an average of 60 percent with each additional daily serving of soda.
Our children and our state deserve better. It is time for the makers of sugary drinks to pay their fair share for their role in California’s obesity epidemic. AB 669 will fund crucial childhood obesity prevention efforts throughout the state and help ensure that our children have a brighter tomorrow.

First 5 LA is grateful to you for authoring AB 669 and is proud to support this important legislation. If we can be of assistance, please contact Tessa Charnofsky, Government Affairs Manager, at (213) 482-7555 or via e-mail at tcharnofsky@first5la.org.

Sincerely,

Evelyn V. Martinez
Chief Executive Officer

EVM:jk

Enclosures: Public Policy Agenda