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### **SBN Statement on Philadelphia's Proposed Sugary Beverage Tax**

Since its inception, the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (SBN) has pursued the vision of a local economy built upon the pillars of environmental responsibility and social equity. We have steadily marched towards this goal through the everyday efforts of our hundreds of business members committed to acting as a force for positive change in the Philadelphia region.

With that same spirit, and after careful evaluation, we have concluded that Mayor Kenney's proposal to levy a 3 cent per ounce tax on sugary beverages is the best way to fund programs that will support a smart growth agenda for our local economy.

*SBN supports this tax because we support a just economy that offers opportunity for all. Of all the big cities, Philadelphia has the highest level of deep poverty, and investments in education are paramount in addressing this issue. High-quality pre-k and community school models have been shown to lead to greater academic success, reduced crime and delinquency, and increased earnings over a lifetime, outcomes that can end the cycle of poverty for many Philadelphians.*

*SBN supports this tax because we support healthy, sustainable communities. For decades, in neighborhoods across the city, parks and recreational assets have seen underinvestment. The Mayor's proposal will lead to the upgrade of dozens of City recreation centers, libraries, and parks, creating safe spaces where residents can learn, play, and lead active lifestyles. Additionally, proposed energy-efficiency retrofits will reduce energy costs for residents and small business owners, alike, while improving our city's environmental impact.*

*And, SBN supports this tax because we support a strong local economy that is headed into the future. Increased investment in Philadelphia's educational system will help to ensure the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs are prepared for a rapidly-changing economy. Robust energy-efficiency retrofits along with a strong Parks and Recreation capital improvement program will generate new business opportunities, and solid career pathways for at-risk populations, returning citizens, and the long-term unemployed.*

There are some who have said this tax is regressive. *But, few things are more regressive for our city and those who inhabit it than a lack of quality educational options in the face of deep poverty. And few things are more regressive for our city than crumbling community infrastructure, too-few safe spaces to recreate, and too-high energy bills that steal away the hard-earned income of working families.*

Additionally, we reject proposals to freeze planned modest reductions in the city's wage and BIRT taxes. Academic studies and local task forces have repeatedly documented the job losses Philadelphia has suffered because of the City's high personal and business taxes. Freezing or raising business and personal wage taxes across the board would take Philadelphia's economy in the wrong direction, and in the case of the wage tax, would disproportionately target Philadelphia's low wage workers. More importantly, the tax revenues captured by a freeze on wage and BIRT taxes are just a small fraction of the funding needed to support the very worthy programs cited in the Mayor's budget.

It is SBN's firm belief that the activities supported by the proposed tax on sugary beverages will go a long way towards improving equity, education, and quality of life in Philadelphia's neighborhoods, all critical factors in advancing the city towards a just, sustainable economy. And, it is for this reason that we offer our support.

*Questions, comments, or inquiries about this statement can be directed to Jamie Gauthier, Executive Director, at 215-922-7400 ext. 101 or [jamie@sbnphiladelphia.org](mailto:jamie@sbnphiladelphia.org).*