

February 12, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



\$320 Million To Drive Healthy Behaviors and Policy Taxing Matters lays out sugar-sweetened beverage tax pros, cons and policy directions.

PHOENIX, AZ — A new report finds that “doing nothing is not an option” and recommends a series of comprehensive obesity-fighting approaches in Arizona, potentially paid for by \$320 million from a tax on sugar sweetened beverages (SSB).

With estimates that Arizona already spends \$1 billion annually on medical costs related to adult obesity, *Taxing Matters: Obesity, Health and Public Policy Choices* lays out the pros and cons of taxing fattening foods in the state. According to one estimate, a 10 percent sales tax on all fattening foods could raise upwards of \$1 billion annually. A one cent per fluid ounce tax on SSBs alone could generate approximately \$320-\$340 million. A local SSB tax in the city of Phoenix would raise about \$80 million.

“This is an idea worth talking about,” noted Roger Hughes, executive director of St. Luke’s Health Initiatives (SLHI), “but only if the revenue is earmarked for obesity prevention, and not for replenishing the state’s general fund.”

“Consumer research confirms this is worth a look,” added Kim Van Pelt, an associate director at SLHI. “In New York, 72% of those polled supported an SSB tax if the revenue was dedicated to obesity prevention.”

Taxing Matters provides arguments on both sides of a fattening food tax, tax methods, food consumption trends, U.S. and international lessons already learned and a call-to-action for Arizona.

For details and a copy of the full report, visit www.slhi.org

About SLHI

St. Luke’s Health Initiatives (SLHI) is a Phoenix-based public foundation focused on Arizona health policy and strength-based community development. For additional information, please visit www.slhi.org.

Contact

Jon Ford, Associate Director, Communications

Phone: 602-385-6508

Email: jon.ford@slhi.org