

Gov. Brown signs legislation requiring healthy options in state vending machines

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By

SACRAMENTO >> Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday signed legislation to ensure that healthy food and drink options are offered in all vending machines located on state property.

"This legislation ensures that every state employee has access to healthy snacks and beverages in the workplace. Promoting the health and well-being of our dedicated workers will pay great dividends for the state by helping to reduce the cost and prevalence of diet-related disease," bill author Sen. Holly Mitchell stated.

All of the latest data show that California is facing a public health crisis fueled by diet-related disease, according to California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA), an independent nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. Diabetes rates have increased more than 30 percent in the past decade. More than two-thirds of Californians are overweight, significantly increasing their risk of heart disease, arthritis, asthma and some forms of cancer.

Lost productivity and medical bills linked to obesity, overweight and physical inactivity are estimated to cost \$52 billion annually in the state, with employers and taxpayers bearing the brunt of these costs, CCPHA states.

CalPERS, the state's employee benefit program, stands to benefit the most from increased access to healthy foods. More than 73 percent of CalPERS members enrolled with Kaiser Permanente are overweight or obese. Of the \$4 billion spent by the program each year, 10 percent is from obesity-related conditions such as cardiovascular diseases (\$300 million) and diabetes (\$100 million).

Senate Bill 912 requires that one-third of all beverages served in state offices must be either water, milk, 100 percent juice or a low-calorie sports drink. Another one-third must be flavored milk, 50 percent juice, a low-calorie soft drink or a healthier option. The final third of beverages are permitted to be full-calorie soft drinks to provide consumers with a wide range of product choices. In addition, at least 35 percent of all foods offered must follow established nutritional guidelines limiting fat, saturated fat and sugar content.

"There is a strong relationship between the workplace environment and employees' health behaviors. Nearly half of our waking hours are spent at work, yet food options are usually limited to unhealthy snacks and drinks that are high in salt, sugar or fat," said Rosa Soto, assistant director of the CCPHA and a cosponsor of the legislation. "Overwhelming scientific evidence links the rise of obesity and diabetes to increases in sugary drink consumption, and this law will help make it easier for workers to make healthy beverage choices at work."

Additional bill cosponsors include the American Heart Association and the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network. SB 912 removed the sunset date from earlier legislation on vending machines, ensuring the requirements remain in state law.

More information about the bill is available at www.publichealthadvocacy.org/resources/sb912/SB912resources.html.