



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES SODA TAX FUNDING
WILL PROVIDE EMERGENCY FOOD FOR PEOPLE
AFFECTED BY COVID-19**

\$1.65 million in funds from the San Francisco Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax will provide emergency food relief for people who are struggling to afford food due to COVID-19

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed, Supervisor Shamann Walton, and Chair of California State Board of Equalization Malia Cohen today announced that \$1.65 million in funds raised by the Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax (SDDT), more commonly known as the San Francisco Soda Tax, will be used to provide emergency relief to those struggling to purchase food as a result of the impacts of COVID-19. The funding closely follows recommendations the SDDT Advisory Committee made at its March 2020 meeting.

“COVID-19 has made it really challenging for some of our most vulnerable communities to access food, whether due to loss of income, longer lines at the stores, closing of dining rooms, or other disruptions to normal routine,” said Mayor Breed. “This funding will support programs and community organizations that are doing the hard work, day in and day out, to feed San Franciscans. As we respond to the health challenges of COVID-19, it’s important that we keep working together to make sure people have enough to eat and don’t have to worry about where their next meal will come from.”

“As we are fighting to feed families and fight hunger during this pandemic, we are happy that we have funds available from the sugary beverage tax, which was always intended to address the gaps that exist in our most vulnerable communities and make sure people have healthy meals,” said Supervisor Walton. “This is how we step up during a crisis.”

“We took on Big Soda to materially reduce health disparities for communities of color,” said Malia Cohen, Chair of the California State Board of Equalization. “For decades, targeted advertising in communities like the Bayview and Mission has led to higher rates of diabetes and heart disease. Now, our community is among the hardest hit by COVID-19 and its economic impacts. Using these Soda Tax dollars to ensure access to fresh, healthy food is exactly the kind of direct investment that we need.”

Because the COVID-19 pandemic exploits the pre-existing inequities in our society, it impacts communities that experience health disparities, economic inequality and discrimination more significantly. Due to these impacts, the funds from the Soda Tax will specifically support low-income people; seniors; pregnant and breastfeeding women; and undocumented immigrants.



The use of the funding began in early May 2020 and will be used by the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market to purchase produce and shelf-stable foods for community groups that are distributing meals to their members, including the Bayview Senior Center and the San Francisco African American Faith Based Coalition, among others. Moreover, the funds will support the San Francisco Unified School District's efforts to continue providing meals to students. Funding will allow the Housing Authority, Mission Language and Vocational School, and partners to provide food to undocumented immigrants and public housing residents, and will support Black and African American faith-based groups and other vulnerable residents. The contracts with these organizations are being finalized.

"The Health Department's partnership with the SDDT Advisory Committee has always been focused on serving our community and ensuring they have access to healthy food options," said Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health. "We know food insecurity contributes to poor health outcomes. This funding cannot be coming at a better time to help reduce the risk of hunger and support healthy food choices for our San Francisco communities most in need during these unprecedented times. The economic impacts of the response to the pandemic are real, and we are glad to have directed funds to support our neighbors who are most affected."

"The SF Soda Tax was designed to make San Francisco a healthier place for everyone," said Joi Jackson-Morgan and Dr. Jonathan Butler, SDDT Advisory Committee co-chairs. "As we face the challenges created by COVID-19, health support is more critical than ever. Yet, we know that the measures we are taking to combat COVID-19, such as sheltering-in-place, mean that many of our neighbors are losing their income and ability to purchase food. We need to bridge this gap immediately to ensure that everyone in our communities has the ability to buy fresh food during this crisis, so the SDDT Advisory Committee voted to make this budget recommendation to the city."

"The SF Market has a long history of supporting our neighbors, be it through food recovery that directs surplus food to those in need, or donations for community events," said Michael Janis, General Manager of San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market. "We were delighted to have the opportunity to further expand our support of our friends and neighbors in need of assistance in this difficult time."

By taxing the distribution of sugary drinks, the SF Soda Tax supports a wide variety of health initiatives in San Francisco, many of which are aimed at making sure all San Francisco residents have access to healthy food. In addition to these emergency funds available for food purchasing, the SF Soda Tax contributes to:

- **Food Security and Healthy Eating** - Over 80,000 EatSF produce vouchers have been distributed to more than 4,400 unduplicated households helping low-income San Franciscans eat more fruits and vegetables.
- **Nutrition in Schools** - Over 20,000 students are experiencing fresher, healthier meals; student-led projects serving about 1,000 individuals are increasing water consumption and decreasing sugary drink consumption; increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity provided in school settings.



- **Physical Activity and Community Building** - Peace Parks provide activities that promote physical, mental, and economic health to approximately 600 people per month in Bayview Hunters Point, Potrero Hill, and Sunnyside neighborhoods. This includes sports and dance activities, a Teen Outdoor Experience program, and workshops on anti-bullying, gender respect, job training, workforce development, and housing.
- **Increasing Access to and Consumption of Tap Water** - Funding will allow for installation of hydration stations in public venues and schools to address disparities in underserved areas. Students will lead projects to educate their peers on the benefits of drinking tap water and the health harms of sugary drinks.
- **Oral Health** - Multiple initiatives are working to improve oral health: task forces in the Mission, Bayview and Chinatown; dental sealants to kindergarteners and first graders; and case management and outreach.

Due to school closures, SFUSD has created [sites throughout the city](#) that are open on Mondays and Wednesdays, where families can pick-up breakfast, lunch, supper, fresh fruit, vegetables and milk to take home.

Addressing food insecurity and expanding food access has also been a critical objective of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). To date, the EOC's Food Distribution Unit has delivered about 66,000 meals through the Food Helpline and the Great Plates Delivered San Francisco program.

About the SF Soda Tax

In November of 2016, the voters of San Francisco passed the Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax (SDDT), more commonly known as the SF Soda Tax. The SF Soda Tax established a 1 cent per ounce fee on the initial distribution of drinks with added sugar within the City and County of San Francisco. That means that a 12 ounce can of soda generates 12 cents for the Soda Tax. Merchants may pass that 12 cents along to consumers. The funds collected from this tax are invested in a variety of healthy programs across the city. Learn more at sodatax-sf.org.

About the Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax Advisory Committee

The Sugary Drinks Distributor Tax Advisory Committee (SDDTAC), a completely volunteer committee, first convened in December 2017 to prepare recommendations to present to Mayor London Breed and the Board of Supervisors on the effectiveness of the SF Soda Tax. The SDDTAC makes funding recommendations that support services and other innovative, community-led work to decrease sugary beverage consumption and related chronic diseases.

- **Goal 1: Healthy People!** We know that the sugary drinks beverage industry targets low-income communities and communities of color in San Francisco. A focus on healthy people provides an opportunity to invest in community power that can address health inequities.
- **Goal 2: Healthy Places!** Having safe, equitable and healthy physical, economic, and social environments is critical to achieving SDDTAC's vision. To ensure that places are healthy in San Francisco, the SDDTAC has prioritized addressing the root causes of health inequities. Learn more: www.sfdph.org/sddtac

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