

Executive Summary: Health Impact Review of SB 5371

SB 5371, Funding public health services and health equity initiatives through a statewide sweetened beverage tax (2021 Legislative Session)

Evidence indicates that SB 5371 would likely increase the price of sweetened beverages, resulting in decreased purchases and consumption of these beverages, which would likely improve health outcomes for those who reduce consumption. The impacts on equity are unclear.

BILL INFORMATION

Sponsors: Robinson, Carlyle, Conway, Dhingra, Pedersen, Saldaña

Summary of Bill:

- Creates a tax on businesses distributing sweetened beverages beginning October 1, 2021.
- Creates a health equity account in the state treasury, requires 60% of revenue from the tax be deposited into this account, and requires that funds in the account be used to address social determinants of health in disproportionately impacted communities burdened by negative health outcomes with a focus on access to healthy foods, reducing food insecurity, access to healthcare, and supporting community infrastructure and capacity.
- Directs 40% of collected revenues to fund foundational public health services as defined in [RCW 43.70.515](#).

HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

This Health Impact Review found the following evidence for provisions in SB 5371:

- **A fair amount of evidence** that creating a tax on businesses distributing sweetened beverages will increase the price of sweetened beverages for consumers.
- **A fair amount of evidence** that increasing the price of sweetened beverages will decrease purchases of sweetened beverages by consumers.
- **A fair amount of evidence** that decreasing the purchase of sweetened beverages among consumers will result in a decrease in consumption of sweetened beverages by consumers.
- **Very strong evidence** that decreasing consumption of sweetened beverages will improve health outcomes.
- **Unclear evidence** of the bill's impact on health inequities. This review found conflicting evidence as to how implementing a tax would affect low-income communities and communities of color. A large body of research has yet to be established. Other factors may also influence how this bill impacts inequities such as availability of untaxed sweetened beverages in neighboring jurisdictions.

FULL REVIEW

For review methods, logic model, strength-of-evidence analyses, and citations of empirical evidence refer to the full Health Impact Review at

<https://sboh.wa.gov/Portals/7/Doc/HealthImpactReviews/HIR-2021-08-SB5371.pdf>

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