

Madame Chair and Council Members,

My name is Jannette O'Neill-González and I reside in Howard County. I am a Latino woman with a Masters degree in Health Sciences from Johns Hopkins University. Professionally, I work with Latino youth in the county. Additionally, I am helping to organize a Latino leader-working group, with whom I have developed this testimony.

We support the Healthy Food and Beverage Bill, and urge you to do the same.

We were excited by two benefits to the Latino Community associated with this bill.

First, many members of our Latino community struggle financially. These families struggle to do things like enroll their children in sports or to buy healthier food. As a community, we need to reduce child obesity and prevent diabetes. Lower cost healthy options in county vending machines would help people make good choices. We are excited by the idea of our county making the healthy choice the cheaper choice.

Second, approval of Bill 17 will set an example for local businesses, showing them the importance of offering healthier foods and beverages to their consumers.

One of the most frequented businesses by the Latino community in Howard County has more than 15 different varieties of sodas from

Central and South America. These drinks are pink, blue, yellow and the rest of the colors of the rainbow.

The storeowner told me he's open to offering healthier options. If the county sells healthier products on its property, it may build the proof he needs that Howard county families, including Latino families, want healthier choices.

Your approval of Bill 17 would give the Latino community the opportunity of choice, the choice to offer a healthier life to their children, free from chronic diseases that would prevent them from becoming productive and contributing members of our County, and our Country.

Thank you for your effort taking into account the positive impact the approval of this Bill will have on the County's Latino population.