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MOORE VOTES TO PASS SCHOOL NUTRITION BILL

Boston - The Massachusetts Legislature today passed legislation that would ban the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in Massachusetts public schools.

“It is important that we act responsibly when it comes to our children’s’ health,” said Sen. Moore. “This legislation will establish minimum standards regarding what our kids are fed while at school, to ensure that they have the healthy meal that should go hand-in-hand with a productive learning experience.”

The bill institutes nutritional guidelines, to be developed by the Department of Public Health, for foods and beverages sold to students outside of the federal meal program. The legislation establishes standards for products sold in vending machines, school stores, and cafeteria a la carte lines.

In addition, the bill requires the annual report that school districts must supply to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to include elements on nutrition and wellness.

Furthermore, the bill dictates that all school districts create school wellness and advisory committees to develop a district-wide wellness policy. The legislation also requires nutrition and exercise as subjects for instruction in schools.

The bill also includes a provision for preferential purchasing for products grown in Massachusetts and instructs the Department of Agriculture to collect data to facilitate the process of local farms and public schools doing business together.

The American Heart Association has confirmed that childhood obesity is one of the most critical public health issues facing our nation today, threatening to reverse the last half century’s gains in reducing cardiovascular disease and related deaths.

One-third of children aged two to five years are either at risk for being overweight or are already overweight. In Massachusetts, 29 percent of middle school students are overweight or obese. Studies show that these children are more likely than their peers to be absent from school, experience low self-esteem and become obese adults.

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