

Feb. 2, 2005

Health and Human Services Committee
Hon. Jim Morrison, chair



Testimony on HB 2137
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Public schools across our state support the development of healthy lifestyle choices for our students. There is no argument that nutrition is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Every educator can appreciate the intent of House Bill 2137. We all want healthier children.

Our society as a whole does not make enough healthy choices when it comes to nutrition, and we've all been guilty of unhealthy snacking. Our purpose today is not to debate the merits of healthy nutrition, but rather to provide information for the committee to consider before it takes action on this bill.

Topeka Public Schools first entered into an exclusive soft drink contract with Pepsi in 1999. The contract was renewed last year for a ten-year period. The financial impact for TPS is approximately \$385,000 a year. These funds are used for a variety of purposes. Pepsi proceeds pay the mortgage on land purchased from the state for Hummer Sports Park, for our staff recognition program and recognition of our Friends of Education nominees. The Pepsi contract means additional dollars in middle and high school activity accounts, generates college scholarship support for our students, provides advertising revenue for high school newspapers and yearbooks, and provides other school support.

In addition to soft drinks, schools realize revenue from snack machines. Those proceeds are also used to support the educational and extra curricular programs of schools. Often, these are the only "discretionary" funds available to schools.

Access to vending machines in our high schools is limited to before and after school and during lunch periods. At the middle school level, access is only after school, and most middle schools don't have candy/chip machines. One of our middle schools doesn't have any vending machines. Vending machines are not available to students at elementary schools in our school district.

We can also report that districtwide sales of Pepsi products are taking a more healthy turn. In the 2002-2003 school year, sugar-carbonated products comprised 62 percent of sales. Last school year that percentage was down to 54. Other choices included diet-carbonated drinks, non-carbonated drinks, water and juice. Last year, 45 percent of the stock in our vending machines was carbonated sugar drinks and 53 percent of the sales came from those vending machines.

We hope that the committee will keep in mind the practical financial impact that this bill could have on our schools. Thank you for your attention, and I stand for any questions you may have.