



Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

Strength in Numbers 95,000

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

Philly.com©

Soda tax splashed at Capitol

by **John Baer**, STAFF COLUMNIST

According to an article concerning the Philadelphia Soda Tax that was posted on Philly.com© said that a state Senate hearing billed as merely a “conversation,” but seen by tax supporters as prelude to a state-forced repeal, was anything but sugary.

The tax was tagged destructive to the city’s economy, devastating to grocery stores, putting people out of work, harmful to poor neighborhoods, and racist.

Philly Democratic Sen. Tony Williams said “it’s duplicitous, because the people it taxes most are the people it purports to help most.” In further discussion of city demographics, Williams said, “We don’t tax lattes. Maybe we should.”

Jeff Brown, owner of several Philly ShopRites and chairman of the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association, said as stated in the article, “It’s a racist tax,” he said. “It falls disproportionately on people of color and assumes they can’t make wise decisions regarding their health.”

The tax, 1.5 cents an ounce on sweetened and diet beverages (4,000 products, says the industry), took effect last January 1 to raise \$90 million a year for

citywide pre-K, parks, rec centers, community schools and libraries.

The hearing was requested by Williams and conducted by Sen. Scott Wagner (R., York), chairman of the Senate Local Government Committee and an announced candidate for governor next year.

There also was testimony that the soda tax will result in lower-income neighborhoods losing access to fresh foods as grocery stores are forced to close.

Jeff Brown, who owns several ShopRites in Philly suburbs, said his city stores’ profits are down 15 percent, his beverage sales are down 60 percent, and he might have to shutter stores in poorer neighborhoods.

There was also testimony about sales declines and upswings in soda purchases outside the city.

Danny Grace, president of Teamsters Local 830, said 150 beverage production workers and drivers have been laid off since the tax took effect.

Meanwhile, there’s a [Senate bill](#) in the works to allow the state to preempt Philly and outlaw the tax.

To view and read entire article go to:

http://www.philly.com/philly/columnists/john_baer/soda-tax-splashed-at-capitol-20171017.html