Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health say yes, using a sophisticated microsimulation model to predict impacts of the tax. In a report [2] released last month, the Harvard researchers calculated the proposed soda tax in Philadelphia would prevent 2,280 cases of diabetes each year once the tax is fully implemented. The Harvard microsimulation model assumes lower consumption if the city implements the three cents tax per ounce of sugar-sweetened beverage, a 49 percent price increase.

The modeling also predicts the tax would raise $400 million over 5 years. Health care savings over a ten year period would approach $200 million for the 1.5 million residents of Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Mayor Kenney is pushing the tax as revenue to fund universal pre-K rather than focusing on the health benefits. The city council vote could come as early as June, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer. [3]

So far Berkeley, California is the only city to tax sugar-sweetened beverages. In New York City, a cap on soda sizes famously failed. Over 40 other measures have failed. In San Francisco and Oakland tax measures will be on the ballot this fall. Boulder, Colorado is expected to have a ballot measure as well.

Opponents to the tax point to its regressive nature, hitting lower income families disproportionately. Other opponents point to the economic effect on distributors, movie theatres, mom-and-pop stores and other small businesses.

By:
Thursday, May 26, 2016 at 10:02 AM
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