



THE CHAMBER

May 19, 2017

Councilmember Tim Burgess
Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmember Burgess,

I would like to express our concerns about the current sweetened beverage tax proposal.

Over the last several months, the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce has worked closely with our partner associations to conduct extensive outreach to businesses across the city to see how this new tax would impact them. After many conversations and careful evaluation of the proposal, the Chamber and its members have a number of concerns with the ordinance, and through our member-led process, our Board of Trustees has voted to oppose the proposal.

Ultimately, our members have concluded the City has not demonstrated how the new stream of revenue would be efficiently spent to drive effective outcomes for the two wide-ranging issue areas identified to receive the funding – education and healthy food programs. While our members support these programs, and believe there should be sufficient funding for both, the City has failed to show how the new revenue would complement the programs and initiatives already in place around these issues. Our members also expressed strong concern with the declining revenue source that this proposal creates, as well as the lack of clarity about the long-term administration costs, which together create an undependable funding mechanism for these important programs.

Through our outreach to businesses, it also became very clear this tax would disproportionately impact our small, local, and minority-owned restaurants, retailers, and beverage manufacturers at a time when the City should ensure they have the right environment to grow and be successful.

While the intention of improving education and health outcomes for the city is incredibly important to the Seattle Metro Chamber and its members, this tax proposal does not provide a clear and effective solution for the needs of the community and would have a negative impact on our small businesses.

We ask that you take our concerns into consideration before moving this proposal forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mindi Linnquist
Vice President of External Relations

seattle metropolitan chamber of commerce

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CC:

Mayor Ed Murray

Councilmember Lisa Herbold, District 1

Council President Bruce Harrell, District 2

Councilmember Kshama Sawant, District 3

Councilmember Rob Johnson, District 4

Councilmember Debora Juarez, District 5

Councilmember Mike O'Brien, District 6

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, District 7

Councilmember Lorena González, Citywide

Brian Surratt, Director, Office of Economic Development

David Mendoza, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor