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## **Study Could Boost Fizzled Efforts to Tax Soda.**

Despite many failed attempts, only one city in America taxes sugary drinks. The results of a new study might change that.

In Philadelphia, former Mayor Michael Nutter tried and failed several times to convince the City Council to tax soda and other sugary drinks. He wanted to use the money to help fund the financially struggling school district. The new mayor, Jim Kenney, is still pushing for a soda tax, and a recent study may persuade people in Philadelphia — and around the nation — to finally pass one.

According to a [Harvard study](#) released last month, if Philadelphia enacts a tax on soda, the city would prevent 36,000 cases of diabetes and save almost \$200 million in health-care costs.

“I knew the findings would be big, but this was more than I expected,” said Philadelphia Health Commissioner Thomas Farley, who helped create New York City’s infamous-but-failed cap on the size of sodas. “It’s especially gratifying since the study came out so close to the City Council debate,” which will take place in the coming weeks.

If the City Council warms to the idea this year, Philadelphia would only be the second U.S. municipality to tax the sale of soda (Berkley, Calif., was the first). But the City of Brotherly Love isn’t the only place considering soda taxes this year. After statewide legislation in California died, two of Berkeley’s neighboring cities — Oakland and San Francisco — have put measures to tax soda on the ballot for this fall. A similar measure is also expected to appear on Boulder, Colo.’s ballot in November.

So far, though, these taxes haven’t been popular with voters. They’ve been rejected 43 times over the past several years at the state and local levels, according to Lauren Kane, senior director of communication for the American Beverage Association.

“These taxes are regressive, they fall hardest on people with the lowest [income],” said Kane. “It would also impact small businesses across the map, from delivery trucks to movie theaters to mom-and-pop corner stores.”

Mayor Kenney, however, argues that the soda tax would benefit the city by bringing in \$400 million over the next few years — which he wants to use to fund universal pre-K. He has so far focused mostly on the economic windfall of the tax. But the study concludes that such a tax would have a positive impact on residents’ health as well.

“For an 18-year-old, one sugary drink a day adds up to 20 extra pounds a year,” said Steve Gortmaker, the study’s lead researcher. “When people with disposable incomes are forced to pay more for something, they’ll slow down with their consumption.”

Soda taxes have proven divisive, even among progressives. Hillary Clinton last month came out in support of the Philadelphia measure, while her Democratic presidential opponent Bernie Sanders called soda taxes regressive because they would impact low-income people the most.

In Philadelphia, Kenney's proposal would add 3 cents per ounce to the cost of sugary drinks, which would increase the cost of a 12 oz. bottle of soda by 36 cents.

Farley is hopeful that the study will drum up support for councilmembers who might have been on the fence. But, he said, "we just don't know what will happen at this point."

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