

## Sample Testimony

### TESTIMONY DELIVERED BY KARIMA ROSE TO THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL REFORM COMMISSION, JULY 9TH 2003

Good afternoon Mr. Vallas, School Reform Commissioners and guests. My name is Karima Rose and on behalf of The Food Trust and the Philadelphia Coalition for Healthy Children, thank you for this opportunity to speak on the topic of the exclusive beverage contract for fiscal year 2004. First, I want to congratulate Mr. Vallas for his commitment to the health of our children by deciding to sell only water and juice in Philadelphia schools. This is a strong statement about the role of schools in helping children develop healthy eating habits and to improve their chance for good health and learning. We are all very pleased that you have made this important first step.

As you know, the New York City School District announced two weeks ago that they were restricting beverages in all schools to ONLY 100% juice and water products in both vending machines and in the cafeteria line. After a thorough nutritional and financial analysis of all school foods, the New York City Board of Education has decided to revamp their entire food system, including insuring that all contracts specify only 100% juice and water without added sugars. Los Angeles is banning soda and other high sugar drinks and eighteen other states have launched initiatives to improve school nutrition.

In Philadelphia schools, we would like ONLY beverages with 100% juice content or higher and bottled water with no added sugars to be sold in ALL schools, both in vending machines and in the cafeteria line. The 100% juice and water standard was recommended by the Select Committee on Nutrition Standards of the Comprehensive School Nutrition Policy Task Force, a citywide group that has been guiding the development of a school nutrition policy in Philadelphia. The Food Trust supports an exclusive beverage contract that would bring in additional funding for the school district and wants to insure that all machines are only stocked with juice and water and that other beverages sold in the school are compatible with this policy.

In a statistically valid, random sample of parents, polled by Madonna Young Opinion Research, nine out of ten parents of Philadelphia public school children want vending machines in schools to be limited to fruit juice and water. Almost three-quarters of all parents - 73 percent - do not want the School District to increase the availability of soda and beverages with added sugar in school vending machines. We should support parents' wishes and provide only the healthiest of juices and water, in all venues in which beverages are sold in schools.

Philadelphia is now in a position of taking the lead in defining what foods should be sold in schools. The District's Food Services Division has already formed a successful partnership with the Comprehensive School Nutrition Policy Task Force that has piloted a nutrition policy in Philadelphia schools. Preliminary results from this pilot project show that revenues from the sale of water and juice products are higher than revenues from the sale of soda products in these schools - in some cases,

more than 33% higher! With a district wide policy, the Philadelphia School District will have the buying power to ask manufacturers to provide healthy products that will promote good health in an environment that supports the sale of these products.

As a product of the Philadelphia public school system, and most recently a graduate from Temple University with a Masters in Urban Education, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of good nutrition on student's ability to learn. In my work with the Food Trust, I have worked to raise awareness about the growing problem of childhood obesity and to promote healthy foods. I look forward to continuing this work in improving the foods sold in schools and in developing policy and nutrition education programs that support healthy eating.

Let's make certain that our schools contribute to the overall health and well being of our children by ONLY selling healthy products in both vending machines and in all other areas that foods are sold in the schools. We are asking the School Reform Commission to develop a policy that guarantees that only 100% juice and water are sold in the schools and to set up a process where the Food Services Division collaborates with The Food Trust and the Comprehensive School Nutrition Policy Task Force to take Mr. Vallas' lead to not only develop a policy, but to oversee the procurement and sales of these products. By doing this, it makes it a win-win situation for all involved, the school district will still bring in revenues, vendors will sell products that improve the health of students, and children will be able to grow in an environment where they improve their minds AND their bodies. If we work together we all WIN.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

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