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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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Commissioner

**SUFFOLK COUNTY
BOARD OF HEALTH**

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Dear Sir or Madam:

The Suffolk County Board of Health of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, Long Island, NY has been advising the Suffolk County Legislature regarding the proliferation of energy drinks by children and young adults. The Board has also advised the US Federal Drug Administration (FDA) of its support of further investigation of energy drinks and its evaluation of the adverse event reports, including associated deaths, submitted to the agency.

The Suffolk County Board of Health considers energy drinks to be a public health issue that needs further action on several fronts in order to protect the children and youth in our communities.

In December 2012 the Board of Health recommended to the Legislature the following:

1. Regulation at the federal level to limit the access to energy drinks by restricting the sale to individuals less than 19 years of age.
2. Regulation at the county (Suffolk) level to limit the access to energy drinks by restricting the sale to individuals less than 19 years of age.
3. Promote a multi-component educational program for the schools, the general public and especially parents so they are aware of the ingredients in energy drinks and their potential dangers, including the total caffeine content from all sources.
4. Labeling of all the ingredients in energy drinks and their components, in milligrams per container (mg/container), should be required on the packages. The label should be on the front of the can, easily visible by consumers, utilizing a color that stands out and a font size that is easily distinguishable.
5. Consideration should be given to the placement of energy drinks in commercial establishments.
6. Propose a local law requiring that a WARNING sign be posted at the point of sale of energy drinks in all establishments in Suffolk County.

The warning is the following:

ENERGY DRINKS WARNING

CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY DRINKS MAY BE HARMFUL TO CHILDREN, PREGNANT WOMEN AND PEOPLE SENSITIVE TO CAFFEINE. ENERGY DRINKS MAY AGGRAVATE HEART CONDITIONS, CAUSE HEADACHES, RAPID HEARTBEAT, DEHYDRATION, DISRUPTION OF SLEEP PATTERNS AND CONCENTRATION, AND IN RARE CASES, DEATH. THESE EFFECTS MAY BE MAGNIFIED IN CHILDREN UNDER AGE 19. ENERGY DRINKS MAY CONTAIN LARGE QUANTITIES OF CAFFEINE AND OTHER INGREDIENTS, INCLUDING HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS, AMINO ACIDS AND VITAMINS. THE INGREDIENTS IN THESE DRINKS MAY INTERFERE WITH CERTAIN PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS FOR ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER, ASTHMA, ALLERGIES, BIRTH CONTROL AND OTHER CONDITIONS. MIXING ENERGY DRINKS WITH ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS MAY POSE ADDITIONAL HEALTH RISKS.

7. Ban the distribution of samples of energy drinks in Suffolk County to individuals less than 19 years of age.

The Suffolk County Legislature enacted legislation in 2013 prohibiting the sale and distribution of stimulant drinks to minors in county parks as well prohibiting the provision of free samples of stimulant drinks or coupons for free or discounted stimulant drinks to any individual under the age of 18 years in the County. The prohibition applies to direct marketing of free samples or coupons for free or discounted stimulant drinks to County residents under the age of 18 years.

The Suffolk County Board of Health supports initiatives by the Toronto Board of Health that will foster the protection of its citizens and especially children, from the detrimental health effects of energy/stimulant drinks.

Respectfully submitted,

James L. Tomarken, MD, MPH, MBA, MSW
Chair, Suffolk County Board of Health