



DC Voices for MEAL Choices

A MEAL choice is an informed choice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DC Voices for MEAL Choices Coalition Advocates for Menu Labeling in Washington, DC

OCTOBER 26, 2009—DC Voices for MEAL Choices, a committee of the Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association, has created a coalition of health and community organizations throughout Washington, DC to advocate for the passage of the DC Menu Education and Labeling (MEAL) Act, which will empower consumers to make more informed food choices by requiring restaurants to provide nutritional information at the point of purchase.

In 2007 DC Council members Phil Mendelson (At-large) and Marion Barry (Ward 8) introduced the DC MEAL Act into the Council's Health Committee, to address the significantly high number of obesity related chronic diseases in the District. The DC MEAL Act would require all restaurants with ten or more locations nationwide to display nutritional information such as calories, fat content and sodium content on menus and menu boards. The version of the bill originally introduced in 2007 was allowed to die in committee, due to a lack of support from Committee Chairman David Catania. In early 2009 the bill was reintroduced to the Health Committee, where Committee Chairman David Catania is again neglecting to call a public hearing on the issue.

Rates of overweight and obesity in the District have been rising over the past two decades, and currently over 50 percent of DC residents are either overweight or obese. Obesity is a risk factor for a large number of health conditions including heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes and certain forms of cancer. Adolescents, adults, and children who eat out frequently are more likely to suffer from obesity and its related conditions due to increased consumption of fat, sodium, and nutrient-poor junk food.

DC Voices for MEAL Choices recognizes that eating out is an important part of the modern American lifestyle. By advocating for menu labeling, DC Voices seeks to give consumers the control to make better food choices when eating out, which will lead to healthier, longer lives for District residents. Over 75 percent of Americans support menu labeling in restaurants, and legislation has already been passed in New York City, California, and Philadelphia. As our nation's capital, Washington, DC should be one of the first cities to adopt these regulations, as an example to the rest of the country.