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MICAH Z. KELLNER
65th Assembly District

February 12, 2009

Governor David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

I am writing in opposition to your proposed tax on health club dues and services as part of the proposed FY 2009-10 Executive Budget.

I understand that in these difficult times, New York State must take action to create revenue in order to balance our budget. However, I believe that the proposed tax on health club dues and services works against your laudable policy goals to fight obesity, including your proposed tax on sugared drinks.

According to estimates released by your office in December, New York State spends almost \$6.1 billion on health care related to adult obesity, the second-highest level of spending in the country. I agree with you that immediate action must be taken to fight this growing problem. But taxing those who strive to better their health by joining gyms and other sports clubs discourages healthy lifestyles and is not in keeping with this goal. It would make more sense to provide incentives to New Yorkers to join a gym, as this would decrease incidences of disease and reduce the state's health care burden in the long run.

Since the health club dues and services tax was proposed, I have been flooded with calls and letters from constituents who are confused about this contradiction and I agree with them. If we pass the budget with these contradictory items in place, we are truly sending a mixed message that diminishes your important message about healthy living.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,

Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member

Cc: Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair Herman D. Farrell