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MEDIA STATEMENT:

**Lifting the Diet Soda Sales Ban Compromises
the Health Environment for Colorado's High Schools**

Leslie Levine, MPH, LiveWell Colorado Technical Assistance and Research Manager

"We are disappointed in the Colorado State Board of Education's decision to bring diet soda back into Colorado's high schools, but we intend to work together with state and school officials, along with partners, to create a healthy school environment across the state.

Today's obesity crisis is a complex issue that cannot be solved overnight. For the past seven years, Colorado has been a leader in promoting healthy standards for school nutrition, including healthy beverages. Choosing to adopt the less healthy federal regulations reverses that leadership and limits our ability to provide a healthy learning environment for students.

Contrary to the justifications made by school board members, returning to lower federal standards does not streamline Colorado laws and policies for schools. Schools will still have to navigate multiple policies and laws despite this decision by Colorado State Board of Education. We appreciate State Board members Val Flores, Jane Goff and Angelika Schroeder for voting against removing the ban on diet soda sales and supporting the health and academic performance of Colorado students.

Ultimately, we believe our students deserve the best environment for learning. Among the 2016 Legislative Priorities for the Colorado Board of Education is to close the student achievement gaps in Colorado. The ties between health and academic achievement are strongly supported through research. And at the same time as many students of color are trailing behind in academic performance, soda companies are disproportionately targeting their advertising to communities of color.

By lifting the ban on diet soda in high schools, the Colorado Board of Education is choosing to prioritize local control and unhealthy beverages over children's health.

We should do everything we can to reduce gaps in academic performance, including promoting a healthy environment in our schools. As an organization focused on creating a healthy environment for all Coloradans, we are committed to working closely with school districts as they create their own individual wellness policies."

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LiveWell Colorado (www.livewellcolorado.org) is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living. With the goal of eliminating health disparities and advancing health equity, LiveWell Colorado focuses its efforts on policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that remove barriers and increase access to healthy behaviors. Working in partnership with obesity prevention initiatives across the state, LiveWell Colorado aims to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation.