

**Ohio Senate
Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee**

Good morning, Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as an opponent in consideration of House Bill 669.

My name is Jodi Salvo. I am a Licensed Master Social Worker and an Ohio Certified Prevention Consultant. I am the Director of the Substance Use Prevention Services in Tuscarawas County with OhioGuidestone. Our social service agency has been serving and meeting the needs of Tuscarawas & Carroll County for over 50 years. I oversee school based prevention education, youth led/peer-to-peer prevention programming, and coordinate the Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition. I also am an active member of the Tuscarawas County Opiate & Addiction Task Force, Children and Family First Council, Healthy Tusc, and serve on an advisory board for Tuscarawas County Big Brothers and Big Sisters. In addition, I am the Chair of Ohio Statewide Prevention Coalition Association and on the Board of Directors for ADAPAO, Ohio's Prevention Professional Association.

I am before you today in opposition of HB 669. My commitment and passion is to see healthy, thriving youth, families and communities in Ohio. As currently written, HB 669 has the potential to do great harm to Ohio's youth and communities. As the coordinator of the Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition, we operate with a mission to empower our youth to live healthy, drug free lives. We are committed to our mission by looking at research, applying best practices, and working to establish community norms that do not promote substances of addiction. We know that the work we do is essential to helping our young people choose not to use substances. Therefore, I am very concerned about HB 669, as it will create alcohol access to youth under the age of 21.

I understand that COVID-19 has and continues to have devastating impact on Ohio businesses. I also understand and support emergency provisions that have been made by the General Assembly to aid businesses during the pandemic. However, I am opposed to creating permanent alcohol expansion legislation with disregard to research and with little-to-no consumer protections.

I am concerned by this and other efforts to weaken and remove alcohol policies in Ohio. Many of our policies regulating the availability and access of alcohol are based on years of scientific evidence.¹ Our existing laws and practices are in place to reduce excessive alcohol consumption (binge, heavy, and underage drinking) and to decrease the negative impact that accompanies excessive alcohol consumption to include, injuries, alcohol related hospitalizations and emergency room visits, addiction, domestic violence, crime, and homicides, just to name a few.

Excessive alcohol use is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States². The economic costs attributed to excessive alcohol consumption are considerable. Much of the costs result from loss in workplace productivity, healthcare expenses, criminal justice involvement and motor vehicle crashes³. Therefore, there needs to be careful consideration and examination of legislation around alcohol expansion. I am concerned that there is a push to make permanent changes to a temporary situation without considering both the research and the long-term effects that these changes can have on our youth, communities and state to include both social and economic costs.

In particular, my major area of concern in HB 669 is the expansion of home deliveries of alcohol. Expansion of alcohol home deliveries has been linked to considerable increases in youth access. Increase youth access is correlated with increase youth use and harm.

- According to the 2018 STOP Act Report to Congress, research on youth access and home deliveries of alcohol are limited; however, one study found 10% of 12th-graders and (7%) seven percent of 18 to 20-year-olds in 15 Midwestern communities reported they obtained alcohol through delivery services in the last year.⁴

- A 2012 study (Williams et al.) examined youth access to alcohol through online vendors that delivered alcohol to the home found that of the 100 orders placed by the underage buyers, 45% were successfully received; 28% were rejected as the result of age verification. Most vendors (59%) used weak, if any, age verification at the point of order, and, of 45 successful orders, 23 (51%) used none. Age verification at delivery was inconsistently conducted and, when attempted, failed about half of the time.⁵
- In North Carolina, after the legislature permitted the home delivery of alcohol by food delivery vendors in 2019, Alcohol Law Enforcement observed non-compliance among some vendors after conducting underage compliance checks to assess youth access. Video clips are available that record noncompliance.
- More recently, in April 2020, the *Washington Post* documented widespread non-compliance among food delivery vendors in California.⁶

Youth access is of a major concern as research is clear that youth who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.⁷ Not only is age of initial use universally associated with lifetime risk for alcohol dependence, but early use also elevates risk for a multitude of mental health and social problems: Rates of conduct disorder, antisocial personality disorder, nicotine dependence, and illicit drug abuse and dependence are significantly higher among youth who drink early.⁸

My interest is not to oppose the positive economic impacts that were intended by HB 669, but rather to ensure that legislation is well researched and crafted, so the appropriate safeguards and common consumer protections are included.

In closing, let me reaffirm my opposition to HB 669 as written. I ask that you protect our youth, communities and State. Ohio has been ranked number one and two in the nation with overdose deaths in the past several years. Do you feel it would be wise to create permanent alcohol expansion in response to an attempt to fix a short-term situation without knowing or considering the long-term impact that this legislation might have on increasing youth alcohol access. I implore you to consider the concerns expressed in opposition testimony, to ensure that HB 669 is amended, and not passed as written,

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