

## Testimony before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee HB 674

**By: Dr. Kerry Metzger, Chairman**

**Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition**

**September 22, 2020**

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 regarding House Bill 674.

As a matter of introduction and background, my name is Dr. Kerry Metzger. I am a retired dentist and practiced for 26 years. I had the privilege to serve in the Ohio House of Representatives from 1995 through 2002. I then served as a Tuscarawas County Commissioner for 16 years retiring from that position in 2018. I am currently serving as the chairman of the Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition. The coalition's vision is "Empowering youth to live healthy, drug-free lives". Our mission is "to prevent youth substance use and misuse by identifying and implementing effective prevention strategies".

I understand that the economic toll of COVID-19 on our business community has been severe. I applaud the General Assembly for coming up with innovative ways to tackle these problems. Addressing this economic impact is important, but doing so unfettered, with little-to-no consumer protections is careless and I believe that the unintended consequences of this bill will do great harm to Ohio's youth, vulnerable populations, and communities resulting lasting harm to our behavioral health system.

From my legislative experience, when crafting good public policy, it is essential to take into consideration many points of view from many different sectors. It appears that this bill was crafted only from the alcohol business sector point of view. It does not appear that the prevention, law enforcement, nor the behavioral health sectors were approached for input into this bill.

Increasing access to alcohol has been shown in studies to lead to increased alcohol-related harms in our communities and to our youth! Therefore, here are some of my concerns as it relates to the prevention sector. There are several items in this bill that does expand access to alcohol.

First, the expansion of hours of alcohol sales on Saturdays and Sundays – This bill expands the hours of alcohol sales 2 hours from 2:00am to 4:00am. Our law enforcement agencies will see an increased in costs due to expanded hours.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services established the Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF). The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommended maintaining existing limits on the hours during which alcoholic beverages are sold. The studies

that they reviewed determined that **increasing hours of sale by 2 or more hours found increases in vehicle crash injuries, emergency room admissions, and alcohol-related assault and injury.**

This language should be removed from the bill.

Other items in the bill also expand hours of operation and therefore increase access to alcohol. This committee should also remove the 24-hour sales option.

My next concern deals with the elimination of the D-6 permit. The elimination of the D-6 permit will remove essential revenue needed to fund law enforcement, state regulatory agencies, and municipalities and townships.

As you are aware, the revenue produced by the D-6 permit produces approximately \$5.9 million dollars. That money is placed in the Undivided Liquor Fund for distribution to 3 other funds. The State Liquor Regulatory Fund (Fund 5LPO), the Statewide Treatment and Prevention Fund (Fund 4750), and a distribution to municipalities and townships.

The State Liquor Regulatory Fund stands to lose \$2.7 million dollars that goes to pay for the operating expenses for the Division of Liquor Control who are tasked with monitoring the actions and practices of liquor permit holders. This weakens the crucial regulatory structure that keeps communities safe.

The Statewide Treatment and Prevention Fund is used by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to fund statewide addiction treatment and education services. This fund helps to fund vital addiction treatment and prevention services across the state. This fund stands to lose \$1.2 million dollars. If HB 674 passes without any considerations for change we will be hurting our youth and vulnerable populations here in Ohio

The municipalities and villages stand to lose \$2.1 million dollars. In fact, the larger the municipality or township the greater their revenue loss will be.

The D-6 permit needs to be retained, not eliminated.

In conclusion, I want to state my opposition to HB 674 as currently written. There will be long-term health and safety consequences if this bill passes as currently written. It is my hope that the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee will take the concerns expressed in opposition testimony to heart and amend this bill so that we protect Ohio's youth, vulnerable populations, and our communities from the scourge of alcohol addiction and abuse.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Dr. Kerry Metzger

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