

Testimony before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee on HB 669

By: Dr. Kerry Metzger, Chairman

Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition

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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 669.

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. Addressing this economic impact is important, but doing so unfettered, with little-to-no consumer protections is careless and dangerous and I believe that the unintended consequences of this bill will do great harm to Ohio's youth, vulnerable populations, and communities resulting in lasting harm to our behavioral health system.

Once again, as in HB 674, HB 669 has little to none of these consumer and youth protections built into it. It appears to me that this bill was written by the for the alcohol industry for the benefit of the alcohol industry.

Alcohol accessibility to our youth and persons dealing with alcohol addiction are most concerning to me. 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, alcohol home deliveries and mixed drinks to go will only exacerbate the access issue. HB 669 has no drink limit, no age requirement for delivery drivers, and no requirement that beverages need to be purchased with food.

To add in some consumer protections into HB 669 the following should be implemented:

- Add a requirement that delivery drivers shall be 21 years or older and the drivers must undergo seller/server training.
- The Division of Liquor Control should be required to create limits on how many drinks a person can purchase at one time based on the type of alcohol. They should create those limits based upon Ohio's drunk driving limitations of .08%

This bill is creating permanent problems when we should be looking for sound, common sense temporary solution to address by Covid-19.

- There should be end dates for the sale of mixed drinks to go and on the sales area expansion language. Place a sunset provision on this bill.

In conclusion, I want to state my opposition to HB 669 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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