



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 115
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Tuesday, January 21, 2019

Good afternoon, Chairman Coley, Ranking Member Craig, Vice Chair Huffman and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 115, legislation that is intended to strengthen Ohio's commitment to preventing underage alcohol consumption and accidents.

Even though the legal drinking age is 21, people aged 12 to 20 drink 13 percent of all alcohol in the United States. Youth who began drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who wait until the age of 21. According to the Ohio Department of Education, more than 90 percent of that consumption is in the form of binge drinking. The 2018 Ohio State Report on Underage Drinking Prevention and Enforcement shows that 21.9% of people between the ages of 12-20 consumed alcohol within the past-month.

Current Ohio Law allows people under the age of 21 to possess and consume alcohol under the supervision of a parent, guardian or spouse. The purpose of this legislation is to eliminate those exceptions. The laws in our neighboring states of Michigan, Indiana, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania provide no exceptions to underage alcohol possession or consumption.

Underage drinking is the most prevalent form of substance abuse among our youth. It is a dangerous behavior that can lead to tragic accidents and varying health problems. Research shows that the longer children delay drinking and drug use, the less likely they are to develop problems associated with it. It is important for us to help Ohio's children and parents make smart decisions about alcohol use.

I look forward to a thoughtful legislative process and appreciate your attention to this important issue. I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 115. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.