



Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

Proponent Testimony on HB 418

Cheri L. Walter, MA, LICDC
Chief Executive Officer
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities
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Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 418. My name is Cheri Walter, and I am the CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. We represent Ohio's Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards.

We are supportive of the change proposed by HB 418 to change the standard from knowingly to recklessly in the application of the provision of the law that prohibits an owner or occupant of any public or private place from allowing an underage person to possess or consume alcohol in that place.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that alcohol continues to be a widely used substance of abuse among youth. The SAMHSA "Facts on Underage Drinking" report further highlights the following:

- In 2019, over 7 million 12- to 20-year-olds reported past month alcohol use, over 4 million reported past month binge drinking, and nearing 1 million reported past month heavy alcohol use.
- On their most recent drinking occasion, 72 percent of youth reported that they obtained alcohol for free. Half of them drank the alcohol at someone else's home.
- Adolescents find it easy to obtain alcohol. The majority of students in 10th and 12th grade reported that it would be "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain alcohol.

I have included a link to the SAMHSA Facts document at the end of this testimony.

Not all underage drinking occurs in settings where the owner or occupant of a facility is aware of it, but some of it does. By changing the standard to recklessly, this measure would serve to further deter individuals from allowing underage drinking to occur in public and private places.

In addition to efforts to deter these activities, we also collectively need to increase our focus on robust, age-appropriate prevention programming for young people and increase educational activities for parents.

In a time when we are seeing increased incidence of anxiety, stress, and depression, we need to focus both on efforts that deter harmful activities and those that promote seeking help and accessing services and supports in the community.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Should you have any questions, please contact me at cwalter@oacbha.org.

Source: [SAMHSA Facts on Underage Drinking](#)