
Prevention Action Alliance

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Ohio Senate Workforce & Higher Education Prevention Action Alliance March 31, 2021

Good Afternoon, Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony in consideration of Senate Bill 126 (“SB 126”).

My name is Jean-Philippe Dorval, and I am the Advocacy and Public Policy Liaison for Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a 32-year-old statewide nonprofit organization based in Columbus, Ohio. We are dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. PAA offers a wealth of resources, training services, grants and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

The recent tragic death of an Ohio college student involving alcohol misuse and alleged hazing activities have college communities and parents alike grappling with grief at the loss of a life that could have been prevented. It is at times like these, a hidden issue is brought to light. Communities begin reimagining ways to evaluate the elements of the tragedy and what can be done to stop it from happening again.

In 2008, a ground-breaking national study on hazing, “Hazing in View: College Students at Risk,” was conducted through the University of Maine. With the lack of recent data on hazing, this national study is still used as a data-driven guide for assisting college communities in addressing hazing tactics.

The use of extreme hazing tactics in college communities places young adults at risk—the use of alcohol increases that risk exponentially. For this study, hazing was defined as “any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers them regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”

The study gathered data showing:

- 55% of college students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations experience hazing.
- 26% participate in a drinking game.
- 12% drink large amounts to the point of getting sick or passing out.

More recent data collected by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) on college student alcohol use (non-hazing specific) reports:

- 53% of full-time college students ages 18-22 drank alcohol in the past month.
- 33% engaged in binge drinking during that same time frame.

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SB 126, which would establish penalties for hazing, aggravated hazing, supporting hazing, and failure to report, is a needed step to help prevent hazing related death or injury at our colleges and universities. The bill also requires the development of a statewide education plan for preventing hazing at institutions of higher education and the adoption of institution-based anti-hazing policies, which would greatly improve the bill's efficacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a proponent for HB 126. I can be contacted through the chair's office should the committee have any questions.