

Ohio Senate Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

Good morning, 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 written testimony as an **opponent** in consideration of **House Bill 674**.

My name is **April Caraway** and I work and live in Trumbull County. I am concerned by this effort to weaken and remove alcohol policies in Ohio. Many of these laws and policies regulating the availability and access of alcohol are based on years of scientific evidence and practice to reduce excessive alcohol consumption (binge, heavy, underage drinking, etc.), alcohol-related injuries, hospitalizations, and mortality.

Addressing economic impact of the pandemic is important, but doing so in an irresponsible way, with little-to-no consumer protections is irresponsible and will put our youth, vulnerable populations, and communities at risk.

In Trumbull County we are experiencing a significant increase in alcohol use disorders.

- In a Tribune Chronicle article on August 15, 2020, Gary Seech, regional director of operations at Glenbeigh, is quoted as saying *"Since Covid-19 was identified in March of this year, we have seen almost a 25% increase in persons seeking treatment services who identify alcohol as their primary drug of choice... The volume of alcohol consumed has also been much higher. Patients have indicated that social isolation and the media's nominalization of drinking at all times of day and night, as contributing factors to their alcohol use."*¹
- According to the Pride Survey administered in 8 Trumbull County school districts during the 2019-2020 school year, **22.3% of 8th graders indicated consuming alcohol within the past year**. This is **5.8% increase** from when the survey was previously administered in 2017. The number of 8th graders reporting alcohol use in according to the Pride Survey administered in 8 Trumbull County school districts during the 2019-2020 school year within the last 30 days also increased during the same time period.
- Trumbull County treatment episode data collected by Partner Solutions reporting group **ranked Alcohol Use Disorder as the 8th most prevalent diagnosis of people seeking behavioral health treatment in 2019. That ranking has already gone up to 7th in 2020.**

Increasing the availability and accessibility of alcohol in Ohio will only exacerbate the already alarming trend of increasing alcohol use and abuse in Trumbull County.

Please protect my community by halting the passage of HB 674.

¹ Staff Report. "County Board sees spike in alcohol use under COVID." *Tribune Chronicle* [Warren], 15 August 2020, <https://www.tribtoday.com/news/local-news/2020/08/county-board-sees-spike-in-alcohol-use-under-covid%e2%80%88/>. Accessed September 10, 2020