

**Ohio Senate
Agriculture and 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 testimony as an opponent in consideration of House Bill 674.

My name is Jodi Salvo. I am a Licensed Master Social Worker and an Ohio Certified Prevention Consultant. I am the Director of the Substance Use Prevention Services in Tuscarawas County with OhioGuidestone. Our social service agency has been serving and meeting the needs of Tuscarawas & Carroll County for over 50 years. I oversee school based prevention education, youth led/peer-to-peer prevention programming, and coordinate the Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition. I also am an active member of the Tuscarawas County Opiate & Addiction Task Force, Children and Family First Council, Healthy Tusc, and serve on an advisory board for Tuscarawas County Big Brothers and Big Sisters. In addition, I am the Chair of Ohio Statewide Prevention Coalition Association and on the Board of Directors for ADAPAO, Ohio's Prevention Professional Association.

I am before you today in opposition of HB 674. My commitment and passion is to see healthy, thriving youth, families and communities in Ohio. As currently written, HB 674 has the potential to do great harm to Ohio's youth, vulnerable populations, communities and perpetuate increased stress on our law enforcement and behavioral health system. As the coordinator of the Tuscarawas County Anti-Drug Coalition, we operate with a mission to empower our youth to live healthy, drug free lives. We are committed to our mission by looking at research, applying best practices, and working to establish community norms that do not promote substances of addiction. We know that the work we do is essential to helping our young people choose not to use substances. Therefore, I am very concerned about many aspects of HB 674 that go in the face of what research says is needed to protect our communities from the negative impacts from alcohol.

I understand that COVID-19 has and continues to have devastating impact on Ohio businesses. I also understand and support emergency provisions that have been made by the General Assembly to aid businesses during the pandemic. However, I am opposed to creating permanent alcohol expansion legislation with disregard to research and with little-to-no consumer protections.

I am concerned by this and other efforts to weaken and remove alcohol policies in Ohio. Many of our policies regulating the availability and access of alcohol are based on years of scientific evidence.¹ Our existing laws and practices are in place to reduce excessive alcohol consumption (binge, heavy, and underage drinking) and to decrease the negative impact that accompanies excessive alcohol consumption to include, injuries, alcohol related hospitalizations and emergency room visits, addiction, domestic violence, crime, and homicides, just to name a few. Excessive alcohol use is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States². The economic costs attributed to excessive alcohol consumption are considerable. Much of the costs result from loss in workplace productivity, healthcare expenses, criminal justice involvement and motor vehicle crashes³. Therefore, there needs to be careful consideration and examination of legislation around alcohol expansion. I am concerned that there is a push to make permanent changes to a temporary situation without considering the long-term effects that these changes can have on our youth, communities and state to include both social and economic costs.

My interest is not to oppose the positive economic impacts that were intended by HB 674, but rather to ensure that legislation is well researched and crafted, that there is not a loss in local control to protect our communities, and that appropriate safeguards and common consumer protections are included. Some areas of concern for me in HB 674 include:

- **Expansion of operating hours from 2 am to 4 am (J- permit).** Expanded availability through increased hours has been well studied by public health experts and the CDC. Research has found that expanded hours, more than 2 hours, will result in increased alcohol consumption, subjecting the public to increased harm and can overburden already limited enforcement, regulatory, and compliance resources to monitor these environments.⁴
- **Elimination of the D-6 permit (\$400-\$500/permit- Sunday sales)** This is particularly concerning as the revenues from the D-6 generates more than \$5.8 million dollars which provide funding for alcohol regulation, local governments, and substance use prevention and treatment services. This funding is needed to keep our communities safe and even more crucial if alcohol expansion occurs.
- **Elimination of the local option elections for Sunday sales and taking regulatory power away from local governments around DORA's.** Communities should have the ability to create and support desired community norms that may include non-saturation of alcohol.
- **Allowing social media advertising for alcohol products with no consumer protection safeguards in place.** It is undeniable the influence and impact social media platforms have on our youth. Research studies are clear, social media and advertising of substances yield increased youth use.⁵ We need not look far to see the long history of abuse by the tobacco industry, and the recent tragic impact the vaping industry has had, by targeting our youth. It is incomprehensible to think that we would open the doors for the alcohol distributors, manufacturers, trade marketing professionals, solicitors, and brokers to have a free for all with our young people. This unfettered legislation, has no restriction or guardrails in place against targeted marketing. With the nature of many social media platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, embedded marketing in gaming systems, and the use of geo fencing, we would be foolish to think our young persons will not be targeted.

In closing, let me reaffirm my opposition to HB 674 as written. I ask that you protect our youth, vulnerable populations, communities and State. Ohio has been ranked number one and two in the nation with overdose deaths in the past several years. Do you feel it would be wise to create permanent alcohol expansion in response to an attempt to fix a short-term situation without knowing or considering the long-term impact that this legislation might have. I implore you to consider the concerns expressed in opposition testimony, to ensure that HB 674 is amended, and not passed as written,.

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 3. Sacks JJ, Gonzales KR, Bouchery EE, Tomedi LE, Brewer RD. 2010 National and State Costs of Excessive Alcohol Consumption. *Am J Prev Med* 2015;49:e73–9.
 4. Hahn RA, Kuzara JL, Elder R, et al. Effectiveness of Policies Restricting Hours of Alcohol Sales in Preventing Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Related Harms. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2010;39(6):590–604.
 5. Megan A. Moreno, M.D., M.S.Ed., M.P.H. and Jennifer M. Whitehill, Ph.D. Influence of Social Media on Alcohol Use in Adolescents and Young Adults, *Alcohol Res*. 2014; 36(1): 91–100.