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February 8, 2012

Dear Chairman Brown and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2532.

I am Pam Fair, representing Kansas Families Against Liberal Liquor Laws, a group of Kansas families opposing changes in state law that will increase access of liquor to children and families.

Numerous studies have shown that with increased access and density of liquor come greater social problems – teenage drinking, DUIs, addiction and violence. I have attached findings from studies done on alcohol density and public health, compiled by the Marin Institute. A brief glimpse of this information paints a disturbing picture.

- Alcohol density is the single greatest predictor of violent crimes in neighborhoods, greater than other social and economic factors. One study found that reducing violent crime by one percent could be achieved by reducing alcohol outlet density by less than one percent.
- Adolescent binge drinking and driving after drinking have been significantly associated with the presence of alcohol retailers within a half mile of one's home.
- Youth who live in neighborhoods with higher alcohol outlet densities have greater access to alcohol from direct purchase.
- Suicide rates among boys between 15 and 19 years old have been shown to increase by up to 12 percent when outlet density increases.

A 2011 Kansas SRS memo indicated that if we increased alcohol outlets as proposed by this legislation, an additional \$4.2 million in state funds would be needed each year for prevention and addiction programs. According to the International Institute for Alcohol Awareness underage drinking cost Kansas \$646 million in 2005 alone. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with alcohol related problems. Youth violence and traffic crashes attributable to alcohol use by underage youth represented the largest costs for the State.

Can we afford for these numbers to increase with greater outlet density and access to liquor?

I am not an economist, so I will not attempt to persuade you with economic statistics. There is no denying, however, the devastating social impact this legislation will have on Kansas. The evidence is incontrovertible. There may be winners and losers economically, but increasing access and density of liquor will only lead to a lost quality of life for children and families.

On behalf of the thousands of Kansas families concerned about the well-being of our children, I respectfully ask you to not lose sight of the tremendous public price of this legislation and vote no on HB2532.

House Commerce & Economic Development

Date: 02/08/12

Attachment #: 20-1

Alcohol Outlet Density and Public Health



Alcohol outlets are places where alcohol is sold, either to drink on the premises (on-sale outlets) or off the property (off-sale outlets). Alcohol outlet density indicates the number of physical locations where alcohol is sold per population or geographic area¹ such as a square mile, census tract, or city block. Alcohol outlet density is often regulated at the local level through zoning and business licensing.² State alcohol control agencies can also stipulate density levels. Numerous studies have shown that alcohol outlet density is significantly related to the level of alcohol harm that neighborhoods experience, particularly violence.

Outlet Density and Alcohol-Related Harm

- Increasing outlet density makes it easier for drinkers to obtain alcohol. High levels of outlet density also can influence how drinkers congregate, making them more aggressive or encouraging others to drink.³
- When outlet density increases, alcohol consumption increases, and vice versa. A study examining 16 years' worth of data in Canada found that reducing off-premise density was significantly associated with a decrease in alcohol consumption.⁴
- Alcohol outlet density is the single greatest predictor of violent crime in neighborhoods, greater than other social and economic factors.^{5,6} One study found that reducing violent crime by one percent could be achieved by reducing alcohol outlet density by less than one percent.⁷
- Cirrhosis deaths, suicide, and assaults all increase when alcohol outlet density increases.⁸
- A 10 percent increase in off-premise alcohol outlets per square mile has been found to account for a 5.8 percent increase in gonorrhea rates.⁹
- Suicide rates among boys between 15 and 19 years old have been shown to increase by up to 12 percent when outlet density increases.¹⁰
- Areas with more retail alcohol outlets have been found to have higher rates of child abuse. Areas with more bars have been found to have higher rates of child neglect.¹¹
- In California, eliminating one bar per zip code would lead to 290 fewer assaults per year.¹²

Outlet Density, Communities of Color, and Economic Development

- Higher alcohol outlet densities, and related higher rates of alcohol-related problems, are disproportionately concentrated in low-income racial or ethnic minority communities.¹³
- Because neighborhoods with high crime rates are unattractive to other types of businesses, a downward spiral occurs where more alcohol retailers move in and the outlet density and related problems continue to increase.¹⁴



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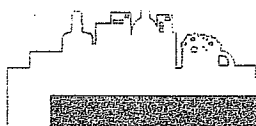
Outlet Density and Underage Drinking

- Adolescent binge drinking and driving after drinking have been significantly associated with the presence of alcohol retailers within half a mile of one's home.¹⁵
- Youth who live in neighborhoods with higher alcohol outlet densities have greater access to alcohol from direct purchase; underage acquaintances; "shoulder tapping" an adult stranger and asking him or her to buy alcohol on the minor's behalf; and from home and family members.¹⁶
- Alcohol retailers are more likely to sell alcohol to minors if other alcohol outlets are nearby.¹⁷
- Hispanic youth who live farther from alcohol retailers are less likely to drink. Decreasing the distance to retailers is significantly associated with an increase in alcohol consumption, even when controlling for social and environmental factors.¹⁸

Bottom Line: The following bodies have recommended alcohol outlet density control as an effective tool for minimizing alcohol-related harm: World Health Organization, European Union, United States Surgeon General's Workshop on Drunk Driving, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Task Force on Community Preventive Services.^{19,20,21} The scientific evidence is overwhelming: Reducing the number of alcohol outlets is an effective tool to reduce alcohol-related harm.

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