

**Impact of Alcohol Sales Deregulation on Underage Drinking:  
A Prevention Perspective**

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**Written Summary  
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Good Afternoon Chairman Kleeb and members of the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development. My name is Sue Matson and I sincerely thank you for the opportunity to speak. I have been a Kansas resident for 30 plus years, first coming here in the 1970s to attend the University of Kansas. I have a Bachelor's Degree from KU in Speech and Human Relations and my Master's Degree is in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. My husband and I have three grown children and a 14 year old that is still home with us in Leawood.

I come before you for both personal and professional reasons. As a mother of four, I have seen, firsthand, the risks of underage drinking through the experiences of my own children and those of many of their friends. The dangerous behavior of underage and binge drinking concerns me and my commitment to prevention began first as a passionate mom, school and community volunteer. My professional career in prevention began four and a half years ago when I took a position with The Regional Prevention Center (RPC) of Johnson County, a program of Johnson County Mental Health Center. The RPC works throughout the community assisting and supporting coalitions and community groups in their efforts to create a positive influence in our county and prevent the negative consequences of youth substance use and other problem behaviors.

My hope today is to bring a different perspective to your consideration of HB 2206. The research that I will provide you will illuminate the relationship between the deregulation of alcohol sales and attitudes and behavior related to underage drinking.

According to the Kansas Communities That Care Student Survey, the average age of first use of alcohol in Kansas is approximately 13 years old. Almost one half of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students report having drunk alcohol in the past 30 days and nearly 70% have drunk alcohol in their lifetime. Over one in four 12<sup>th</sup> graders report binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) in the past two weeks.

[www.ctcdata.org](http://www.ctcdata.org)

The efforts of the Regional Prevention Center of Johnson County, our state prevention network and many of the substance abuse prevention professionals across the United States is based on a **Risk and Protective Factor Model** and the 30 year body of research by Dr. J. David Hawkins and Dr. Richard F. Catalano at the University of Washington Social Development Research Group.

[http://www.sdr.org/presentations/pullman\\_100812\[1\].pdf](http://www.sdr.org/presentations/pullman_100812[1].pdf)

Their research defines **Risk Factors** as characteristics within an individual, family, school or community that increase the likelihood someone will engage in unhealthy behavior like the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The more risk factors present in a child's life, the greater the likelihood problems will develop in adolescence. If young people have the perception that alcohol use in the community is not that big of a deal or that it is simply a part of the growing up years they are much more likely to use alcohol. **Protective Factors**, on the other hand, are those characteristics within an individual or conditions in their family, school or community that will assist them in making healthy

decisions and successfully negotiating the teen years. Strong connectedness to their family and community and opportunities for healthy activities within the community are examples of protection for young people. Two very important aspects of the prevention of underage drinking are limiting access to alcohol and the expressions of positive community norms. Community norms are those unwritten rules and customs that make people behave the way they do. These two factors can be instrumental in increasing protection and decreasing risk for youth.

**First**, I submit that increased numbers and density of alcohol outlets related to new licenses as described in HB 2206 will increase the chance that youth under the age of 21 will have greater access to alcohol, increasing risk in their community. If alcohol becomes much more readily available in grocery stores, gas station/convenience stores, as well as stores like the big box discount stores, it will increase access not only to adults, but also to our youth.

-In a report entitled "The Danger of Alcohol Deregulation: The United Kingdom Experience", Pamela Erickson, the former Executive Director of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission and current President/CEO of Public Action Management describes how over time the UK deregulated its comprehensive alcohol regulatory system to the point where all forms of alcohol became available and can be sold in bars, clubs and grocery stores 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As a result, the UK is currently experiencing many alarming issues. They have one of the highest rates of alcohol consumption in the world with associated issues of alcohol related disease, death, underage drinking and related violence. Their underage drinking rates are over twice that of the United States.

[www.healthyalcoholmarket.com](http://www.healthyalcoholmarket.com)

-Another aspect of alcohol availability impacted by increasing the numbers of alcohol sales licenses, is the number of hours in a day that alcohol would be available for sale would likely increase. Grocery, convenience and big box stores are already open many more hours throughout the day and week than traditional liquor stores.

[www.healthyalcoholmarket.com](http://www.healthyalcoholmarket.com)

-Younger salespersons would be more empowered to sell alcohol as outlets increase. Research in other states shows that this results in more sales to underage buyers.

[www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/facts/facthow.shtml](http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/facts/facthow.shtml)

- Higher levels of drinking and binge drinking have been observed among youth residing in zip codes with more alcohol outlets.

[http://michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Outlet\\_Density\\_Associated\\_Harms\\_Summary-3.10.2011\\_373894\\_7.pdf](http://michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Outlet_Density_Associated_Harms_Summary-3.10.2011_373894_7.pdf)

-This past weekend I engaged in a bit of informal research in the area immediately surrounding my home in Leewood. There are currently 4 liquor stores within close proximity to my home and our area schools. In addition, there are a number of grocery and convenience stores that sell reduced alcohol content cereal malt beverage. After deregulation, I estimate that the sale of strong alcoholic beverages will be expanded to,

at minimum, 12 additional locations that include grocery stores, gas station/convenience stores, discount big box stores and possibly drug stores.

**Secondly**, as more outlets for the sale of strong alcoholic beverages become available across our state, community norms related to alcohol use will be altered. Alcohol use will be much more normalized and accepted as common behavior. The protective factor of positive community norms for youth could be decreased.

-If more outlets are opened for sales throughout Kansas, young people will be exposed to even more alcohol images and advertising than they already experience. In addition to the alcohol advertising they see on television, in magazines, on billboards and at sporting events they will also see advertising displays and posters in the retail establishments they frequent on a daily basis -- the grocery store, the gas station/convenience store and even the WalMart or Target close to their home. As we all watch television and sporting events and view various media today we know that young people are bombarded with media and advertisements that make drinking appear sexy, fun and appealing. A study published in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine in 2006 found that youth who saw more alcohol advertisements on average drank more; and youths in markets with greater alcohol advertising expenditures drank more.

<http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=204410>  
[www.healthyalcoholmarket.com](http://www.healthyalcoholmarket.com)

-In thinking about your own children, or possibly your grandchildren, it is possible that they have never had the opportunity to enter a traditional liquor store. A liquor store is not a common place to see children. However, if alcohol sale is opened to many more retail outlets, even small children will begin to see increased alcohol products on the shelves of stores they frequent on a daily basis to purchase milk, bread, cereal, gas and even their clothing. This exposure can be a risk factor in their lives.

Thank you for your time and attention this afternoon. I urge you to oppose HB 2206 and keep our youth from this increased access and availability of alcohol. If this bill passes, we can expect our own rates of underage drinking to increase.