



MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

HB 858 Alcoholic Beverages - Class A Licenses - Retail Grocery Establishments
House Economic Matters Committee. Hearing: Feb 21, 2022

UNFAVORABLE

The Alcohol and Tobacco Commission has been charged with developing a public health impact statement for all changes to the State alcoholic beverages laws. Any sweeping change in the numbers of alcohol retail establishments should be postponed until public health impacts are understood.

Alcohol Retail Density is a known predictor of health disparities. (1)

Public health advocates have longed worked to reduce this density in order to improve health. An increase in retail alcohol establishments, in and of itself, **will increase alcohol consumption.**

Grocery establishments will use marketing and advertising to increase sales through media and in-store ads. **Marketing and advertising increases consumption (and, therefore, unhealthy alcohol use).**

Unavoidable exposure to alcohol products and marketing will trigger alcohol purchases, including among those attempting to limit their consumption for health or other reasons. These unavoidable displays will tend to **normalize alcohol consumption.**

Minors will also experience normalization of alcohol consumption in groceries, and will be exposed to marketing and advertising images. **De-normalization of substance use is a standard public health approach** for decreasing the use of tobacco and alcohol among youth.

Both alcohol sales, (2) and suicide rates among minority populations in Maryland, have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. (3)

Most Americans do not have evident harms resulting from alcohol consumption (other than an increased risk of cancer or possibly other health problems).

However, alcohol use is the third-leading preventable cause of death in the United States. (4)

Alcohol use is a factor in the development of mental health problems, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, at least five forms of cancer, as well as learning, school performance, social, & occupational problems. (5)

(continued...)

"Even small amounts of alcohol can increase the risk of several cancers. **There is no threshold of alcohol consumption below which cancer risk does not increase**" according to the American Institute for Cancer Research (6)

The following information is from the National Institute of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (Ref 7)

25.8 percent of people ages 18 and older, and 11% of those aged 12 to 20, engaged in binge drinking in the past month.

Over 10 percent of U.S. children ages 17 and younger live with a parent with alcohol use disorder.

Alcohol is a factor in the deaths of thousands of Americans younger than age 21 each yr. including

1,092 from motor vehicle crashes

1,000 from homicides

208 from alcohol overdose, falls, burns, and drowning

596 from suicides

We respectfully urge an unfavorable report.

Joseph A. Adams, MD, FASAM, Chair, Public Policy Committee

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