

## **H.B. 5211 An Act concerning Underage Drinking**

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My Name is Catherine LeVasseur I am a student at Central Connecticut State University, the former Youth Chair of the Connecticut Coalition to STOP Underage Drinking, and a board member of the New Haven County chapter of Mother's Against Drunk Driving. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of bill 5211 An Act Concerning Underage Drinking.

Underage drinking at house parties is a serious issue that should not be taken lightly. This is not just a rite of passage, or an experiment, in fact I have a hard time calling any potentially deadly activity a rite of passage. These underage drinking house parties are happening every day, often with the knowledge if not presence of an adult over the age of 21. This bill is crucial in preventing underage drinking because it holds both youth and adults accountable for their actions and involvement with underage drinking. As a student I'm constantly bombarded with elaborate tales of teenagers doing beer bongs, binge drinking, passing out, participating in various activities that sober people would not, and constantly putting themselves, and others in danger. The sad truth is that more than 50% of high school students, and 68% of underage college students report to have driven after drinking.

We need to act now, too many young lives are being destroyed due to a preventable cause. Too many kids are dying before they have a chance to meet their full potential and leave their mark on the world. We need to act for the elementary school students who are now experimenting with alcohol. We need to make a change in CT that says we will not tolerate underage drinking.

We can't go another year without this law. Connecticut's teens are drinking too much, too early, and too often. I had to start reading the obituaries when I was 14. Now there is another generation that has to tune into the news to see if one of their classmates has died over the weekend as a result of a senseless tragedy. This law will save lives in the future. As legislators you hold the lives of young people in your hands and will continue to do so as this bill winds it's way through the committee process and onto the floor of the House and Senate. Let's work together today, because underage drinking should be illegal **wherever** it happens.

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