



TESTIMONY OF

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The Century Council**

**SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
In Support of HB 6822
Joint Judiciary Committee
Connecticut General Assembly**

April 2, 2007

Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor and distinguished members of the Committee, as President and CEO for The Century Council, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of House Bill 6822 which will help to reduce hardcore drunk driving in Connecticut.

The Century Council was founded in 1991 and is an independent, national not-for-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. Funded by America's leading distillers (Bacardi U.S.A., Inc., Brown-Forman, Constellation Brands, Inc., DIAGEO, Future Brands, LLC, Hood River Distillers, Inc., and Sidney Frank Importing Co. Inc), the Council is dedicated to developing and implementing programs that fight drunk driving and underage drinking. To date, we have hosted nearly 2,200 community events to launch our programs across the nation bringing them to millions of parents, youth, educators, law enforcement officials, judges and traffic safety professionals.

An independent Advisory Board comprised of distinguished leaders in business, government, education, medicine and other relevant disciplines assists the Council in its development of programs and policies. Additionally, the Council maintains advisory panels in the areas of education and traffic safety that provide related guidance.

Through the years, The Century Council has worked extensively throughout the nation on anti-drunk driving and underage drinking efforts. The Council's education efforts start in middle school and continue through college. *Ask, Listen, Learn: Kids and Alcohol Don't Mix*, a creative multimedia program developed with Nickelodeon to help middle school aged children and their parents engage in on-going conversations about the dangers of underage drinking; *Not In Our House: A Nationwide Initiative on Underage Drinking and Social Hosting* developed with

Scholastic Inc., and sponsored by the International Institute of Alcohol Awareness (IIAA) a community-wide initiative to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal underage drinking; *Brandon Silveria's, Make the Right Choice*, a speaking tour by a young man who was involved in an alcohol-related crash in high school; *Girl Talk: Choices and Consequences of Underage Drinking*, an initiative, in partnership with the US Women's National Soccer Team Players Association, which works to improve dialogue among mothers and daughters on the issue of underage drinking. *Parents You're Not Done Yet*, a brochure that encourages parents to talk with their teens before they leave for college about the dangers of underage drinking; *Cops in Shops*, a cooperative effort involving local retailers and law enforcement designed to deter minors from attempting to purchase alcohol illegally and adults who purchase alcohol for minors; *We Don't Serve Teens*, a public awareness campaign developed in cooperation with the Federal Trade Commission that concentrates on underage drinking prevention with a special emphasis on the severe legal consequences of providing alcohol to minors and *Alcohol 101 Plus*, an innovative, interactive CD-ROM program aimed at helping students make safe and responsible decisions about alcohol on college campuses. The program is widely used across the country and is in use on 19 campuses in Connecticut.

Our educational programs have been developed with the assistance of public and private organizations, such as the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the U.S. Department of Education, the National Middle School Association and the American School Counselor Association.

Additionally, The Century Council is working to educate the judicial branch on hardcore drunk driving. *The Hardcore Drunk Driving Judicial Guide*, a partnership with the National Association of State Judicial Educators and the National Judicial College provides a resource for judges and judicial educators with strategies and tactics to identify and sentence hardcore drunk drivers.

Reducing Hardcore Drunk Driving

Responding to a growing body of research that points to repeat offenders and hardcore drunk drivers as the source of a large and disproportionate share of highway crashes, in 1997 the Council created The National Hardcore Drunk Driver Project. The Project serves as a single, comprehensive resource to assist state legislators as well as highway safety officials, law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, community activists and treatment professionals in developing programs to reduce hardcore drunk driving.

At the national level, The Council along with AAA and the National Transportation Safety Board have formed The Coalition to Fight Hardcore Drunk Driving to support state legislative proposals to enact comprehensive and effective solutions to the hardcore drunk driving problem. Additionally, The Century Council supports MADD's *Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving*. We are very pleased to offer our support and assistance to you in your efforts.

Impact of Hardcore Drunk Drivers

Hardcore drunk drivers are those who drive with a high blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .15 or above, who do so repeatedly, as demonstrated by having more than one drunk driving arrest, and who are highly resistant to changing their behavior despite previous sanctions, treatment or education efforts.

Hardcore drunk drivers are involved in the majority of alcohol-related traffic fatalities. Crash data shows that drivers with a BAC of .15 are 385 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a non-drinking driver. In Connecticut, 55.4 percent of drivers with known BAC levels who were involved in alcohol-related traffic fatalities in 2005 had BAC levels of .15 and above according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The national average is 59 percent.

Based on our research, we believe that strong laws enabling swift identification, certain punishment and effective treatment are critical fundamental elements necessary to reduce the incidence of hardcore drunk driving and believe that these elements must be coordinated into a statewide system to be effective. We also favor tiered systems that allow for more severe penalties, treatment, and aftercare for hardcore drunk drivers.

The Century Council strongly supports the sanction of ignition interlock devices for hardcore offenders and for offenders who continually refuse to submit to a BAC test and defers to judicial discretion for first-time/ non-hardcore offenders. The Council supports HB 6822 which would require the use of ignition interlock devices for third time drunk driving offenders.

Conclusion

While Connecticut has made significant progress in the fight against drunk driving, laws designed to provide a comprehensive system that facilitates the swift identification, certain punishment and effective treatment of offenders should be a legislative priority. The Century Council thanks you for your leadership in this effort and stands ready to assist you in this important endeavor, which will ultimately save lives in Connecticut. Thank you.