



University of Connecticut Health Center
School of Medicine

Ethel Donaghue
Center for Translating Research
into Practice and Policy

Matthew J. Cook, MPH
*Research Associate
Clinical Instructor*

February 8, 2011

Joint Committee on General Law
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue, Room 3500
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Doyle, Representative Taborsak and Members of the General Law Committee,

My name is Matthew Cook. I am a public health researcher and instructor at the UConn Health Center with over 14 years experience in the areas of substance abuse prevention research and policy. I am also a resident of Simsbury in Senator Witkos's district. I am writing on my own behalf to testify in **opposition** of two raised bills:

- **HB No. 6264: An Act Authorizing the Sale or Dispensing of Alcoholic Liquor on Sunday**
- **SB No. 864: An Act Concerning Grocery Store Beer Permits**

Both bills run contrary to extensive research and strong health policy evidence which suggests we should be reducing the number of hours and locations where alcohol is sold rather than expanding them to further prevent alcohol use and alcohol-related health problems. Ultimately, if implemented, these two policies would likely do more harm than good by promoting increased alcohol consumption and the negative consequences and harms commonly associated with it.

Raised HB 6264 is intended to repeal the restriction on the Sunday sales of contained alcoholic beverages sold off-premise (e.g. in package stores, liquor stores, grocery stores) for consumption elsewhere. This proposed change in the law, if implemented, would fly in the face of sound scientific evidence supporting policies that maintain or restrict the number of days in which alcohol is sold to control and prevent excessive alcohol use and its related harms.

Just two months ago in December 2010, researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had a study¹ published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* which looked at the issue of maintaining or expanding the number of days of the week in which alcoholic beverages may be sold. Researchers reviewed and critically examined the available research evidence over the last forty years. They looked at 14 different studies in the United States and in other countries. The CDC researchers concluded that **adding days of alcoholic beverage sales** by allowing alcohol to be sold on Sundays **increased excessive alcohol consumption and related harms, including alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and DUIs, and in some cases, assaults and domestic disturbances.** The authors also concluded that maintaining existing bans on Sunday

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263 Farmington Avenue, MC 6229
Farmington, CT 06030-6229

Telephone: (860) 679-3075
Facsimile: (860) 679-1434
E-mail: cook@nso2.uhc.edu
Web: trippcenter.uhc.edu

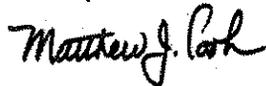
alcohol sales can prevent alcohol-related harms that would be associated with increased days of sale.

SB No. 864 would allow for the retail sale of beer at convenience stores by making them grocery stores and expands the availability of alcohol to additional types of commercial outlets. Expanding the physical availability of alcohol through increased retail outlets, would likely have several negative effects including: 1) increasing the density of outlets where alcohol may be purchased, 2) changing the type of retail outlets where alcohol may be purchased to include convenience stores with gas stations, and 3) increasing the physical availability of alcohol to minors who are under the age of 21 years old. **Research has shown that policies which expand the density of retail alcohol outlets or physical availability of alcohol are associated with increased consumption of alcohol, including heavy consumption, and increases in alcohol related problems** such as motor vehicle crashes and fatalities, assaults, and hospital related admissions due to alcohol-specific diagnoses.² Furthermore, there is evidence that increasing the availability of alcohol would likely increase its use by young people and underage persons.³ This policy conflicts with existing national, state, and local alcohol prevention efforts that are underway in our state aimed at reducing alcohol consumption by both young people and adults.

In summary, based on the strong and consistent scientific evidence available in the literature, it is my opinion that these two policies would expand the availability of alcoholic beverages and increase the prevalence of the harms and costs associated with alcohol-related motor vehicle injuries and fatalities, assaults, violence and other negative health conditions. These policies are bad for public health and prevention. The committee should keep the existing preventative limitations in place and not implement either of these bills.

Thank you for considering my views on these two pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Cook, MPH

cc: Senator Kevin D. Witkos, 8th District

¹ Middleton, J.C., Hahn, R.A., Kuzara, J.L., et al. (2010). Effectiveness of Policies Maintaining or Restricting Days of Alcohol Sales on Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Related Harms. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 39(6), 575-589.

² Babor, T., Caetano, R., Caswell, S., et al. (2003), *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and public policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2004). *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.