



General Law Committee Public Hearing
February 28, 2012

HB 5021 An Act Concerning Competitive Alcoholic Liquor Pricing and Hours of
Operation for Permittees

The Madison Alcohol and Drug Education Coalition (M.A.D.E. in Madison) strongly opposes the proposed changes outlined in HB 5021 An Act Concerning Competitive Alcoholic Liquor Pricing and Hours of Operation for Permittees. As a member of the Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking and a community coalition actively working to reduce underage drinking and youth substance abuse in the town of Madison, we are concerned about the potential impact this bill would have on Connecticut's youth.

M.A.D.E. in Madison is a diverse coalition of community members striving to promote positive youth development. Our focus is to foster a community that values its youth and promotes healthy decisions. We are not alone, there is a network of community coalitions across our state working hard to reduce our underage drinking rates which traditionally run higher than the national averages. It is our collective goal to combat underage drinking through education, behavior change, and reduced access to alcohol. The changes included in the proposed bill could have a negative impact on the movement that we have worked so hard to create and maintain.

As you know, this is more than just expanding sales to Sunday for convenience. The proposed bill would extend the hours of sales to 10:00pm in off-premise establishments and 2:00am for on-premise establishments. Additional changes would expand the number of establishments who would be eligible for a "grocery beer permit." Though we currently have restrictions on the number of liquor permits a town is allowed to have, there is no restriction on the number of grocery beer permits. This change could allow for thousands of additional permits in locations already frequented by teens, thus expanding youth access. Many of these new establishments have teens working the registers, and limited resources to train staff on safe and legal alcohol sales. Expecting young clerks to be able to refuse sales without training puts an unfair burden on those young employees and increases the permittee's liability. From our experience with conducting compliance checks in our community, markets are more far more likely than liquor stores to sell to underage customers.

Although we understand the need to generate increased revenue for our state, we want to be aware and careful about the way we generate it. Studies show that when our youth drink, they drink at heavier rates than average adults. Underage customers drank an average of 4.0 drinks per day, compared to 1.7 drinks by legal customers. According to the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation underage drinking cost the state of Connecticut over \$600 million dollars in 2010. In tough economic times it is important to strive to reduce that figure to save the state money for years to come.

There is also a concern for youth safety. We have worked hard for years to strengthen the teen driving laws to ensure youth are safe on our road ways. Increasing the hours and days of alcohol sales could potentially increase youth alcohol related traffic crashes. According to a 2009 Stanford University study, repealing an alcohol "blue law" increases fatal crashes on Sunday by 7.4%. According to a 2006 study conducted in New Mexico following the approval of Sunday sales, alcohol-related automobile crash fatalities increased by 42% and alcohol-related crashes overall increased by 29%. According to our 2011 Search Institute Survey, here in Madison 8% of our high school students have driven after drinking and an alarming 24% of our students in 7th-12th grade have ridden in a car with a driver who had been drinking.

We will continue to do our part here in Madison to reduce those numbers, and the number of youth who drink underage, but we need your help. M.A.D.E. and the other community coalitions can't do this alone, we need the support of all of our elected officials to continue to keep our youth safe and successful so they can become contributing members of our communities. The first step is for you to oppose HB 5021 and show that you are against increasing youth access to alcohol. Thank you for your time and consideration.