



ALLISON FULTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HVCASA

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HB 5360- An Act Prohibiting Certain Persons From Allowing Minors to Possess Alcoholic Liquor in Dwelling Units and on Private Property

Thank you Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Allison Fulton and I am the Executive Director of the Housatonic Valley Coalition Against Substance Abuse (HVCASA), a CT Regional Action Council in the northwestern part of the state. I am here today to speak in favor of House Bill 5360, (An Act Prohibiting Certain Persons From Allowing Minors to Possess Alcoholic Liquor in Dwelling Units and on Private Property). If passed, this bill will strengthen proven prevention strategies that are currently in place at the local level.

Every two years our organization conducts a community needs assessment for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and, in our region, underage drinking has been identified as the number one prevention priority every time. Alcohol is by far the drug of choice among youth. It is often the first one tried and it is used by the most kids. 2011 student surveys from our area indicate 63% of 12th graders drank in the past month. The average age of first use is 13. Further, and perhaps most troubling, is the fact that during the past year, 23% of 8-12th graders report being a passenger in a car with a driver who had been drinking. Chances are all of our communities have their share of youth at risk. I have been working in this field for 10 years and I have no reservations about asking for the boost up that this legislation would provide. We need to continue to reduce access. Changing the first offense to a misdemeanor is an appropriate revision.

Parents' ability to influence whether their children drink is well documented and is consistent across racial/ethnic groups. Setting clear rules against drinking, consistently enforcing those rules, and monitoring youth behavior all help to reduce the likelihood of underage drinking. We are too well aware of parents who host high school drinking parties after Friday night football games and dances. Our local prevention councils support the notion of holding adults responsible for teen parties. For this reason, I would urge you to change the language of the bill stating that adult must be present for the law to be enforced. Based on the statistics above, it could be argued that if you are an adult with underage children and you are not supervising them or setting clear limits in your home, you are permitting them to possess alcohol. It does not matter whether you are there, or not. We need to send a clear message to adults about the serious risks and possible subsequent liabilities associated with underage drinking.

Thank you for your time and concern.