

General Law
Public Testimony
February 19, 2015

Testimony in Opposition of SB 828
An Act Requiring Municipalities with High Population Densities to Authorize the Issuance and
Renewal of Permits for the Sale of Alcoholic Liquor

Good morning, Co-Chairs Senator Leone, Representative Baram; Vice Chairs Senator Larson, Representative Kiner; Ranking Members Senator Witkos and Representative Carter; and esteemed members of the General Law Committee.

My name is Denise Best. I am currently an assistant clerk to the General Law Committee. I am also a resident of Hartford, a homeowner in the Upper Albany neighborhood, and the Chair of the Upper Albany Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (UANRZ).

Historic Upper Albany is the gateway from the west to downtown. For the past fifteen years, the stakeholders in the Upper Albany community have been working with state, city and local officials to enhance the quality of life by creating a pedestrian-friendly commercial district that offers unique goods, products and services. It is our goal to position the Upper Albany as a destination for arts, education and entertainment.

Upper Albany has been the recipient of several studies including one conducted by the Urban Land Institute. Upper Albany Main Street, whose mission is "to preserve, revitalize, and support the commercial district of UAMS to create a neighborhood of choice", has secured 5 million dollars from DECD for a multi-year commercial facade program to complement the state's apportioned investment of \$28 million for the Albany Avenue/RTE 44 Safety Improvement/Streetscape Project. In response to these developments, several community leaders, myself included, walked the Avenue with Senator John Fonfara, who agreed that the rehabilitation and revitalization of Albany Avenue (Route 44) should proceed in nodes or blocks starting at Westbourne Parkway, which includes the University of Hartford's Handel Center for the Performing Arts, Fichman Eye Center, a new dental office, Tooth and Gumz, Living Word Imprints, Evay Beauty Salon, and the Caribbean Resource Center. Other substantial investment in the neighborhood includes, but is not limited to the Albany Branch Library, a state-funded 1.2 million project to transform the former Northwest Jones School building into the John E. Rogers African-American Museum and Cultural Center, and state funds to renovate the Artists Collective. In keeping with the community's vision for the neighborhood, to change the perception of crime, we hope to limit, if not reduce, the number of package stores on Albany Avenue.

Under Section 30-14 of the Connecticut General Statutes, The Department of Consumer Protection may issue one (1) package store for every 2,500 residents of a town, as determined by the most recently completed decennial census. Hartford, with nearly 125,000 residents, is therefore allowed 49 (legitimate) package store permits. This does not take into account the vast number of bodegas, small "groceries", wholesalers and other such establishments in our

neighborhood that sell beer and/or wine. Though the number of "package stores" per town has a limit, there is no such limit on other liquor permit types.

A report from our Community Service Officer, Anthony Rinaldi, in the fall of 2013, confirmed that there had been numerous arrests, seven or more, due to loitering around the Kent Package Store at 1438 Albany Avenue. When the community became aware that Kent Package was planning to relocate to 1482 Albany in close proximity to Fichman Eye Center, and in our designated node, we reached out to Daniel Loos, Director of Licenses and Inspections.

On December 3, 2013, as the Assistant Director of Upper Albany Main Street, I attended a meeting with Commissioner William Rubenstein, Department of Consumer Protection, to whom we presented letters of support and a petition with over 250 signatures opposing the reopening of the Kent Package store, in addition to requesting that the number of permits for package stores be reduced. Though impressed with our effort, no decision was made at that time.

Despite our pleas and valiant effort, Mr. Loos issued the Kent's owner a permit. The total disregard of the community's standpoint, the number of emails and letters that went back and forth between our agency and Mr. Loos, and the numerous times he contradicted himself as we attempted to ascertain whether or not the building had been condemned, and if a permit had been granted, is proof that at least our municipality is not prepared for the weighty responsibility of authorizing the issuance and renewal of permits for the sale of alcoholic liquor.

Respectfully submitted,



Denise T. Best
Chair
Upper Albany NRZ

The owner of a Hartford liquor store is in critical condition after being robbed and shot several times on Wednesday night.

The owner of Oakland Package Store was robbed and shot as he was leaving the business Wednesday night. Police are still investigation and searching for the suspect. (Published Thursday, Jan 22, 2015)

Updated at 2:41 PM EST on Thursday, Jan 22, 2015

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 10, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- Restricting the number of locations where alcohol can be sold in a community may help reduce domestic violence, researchers say.

The team at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reviewed 16 studies that examined the link between alcohol sales regulations in communities and rates of intimate partner violence. Some of the things they looked at included the number of alcohol sales outlets, hours of days of alcohol sales, and alcohol pricing/taxes.

The only factor consistently associated with rates of domestic violence was the number of locations where alcohol was sold. Locations included bars and restaurants, and liquor, grocery and convenience stores, according to the researchers.

Most of the studies found that communities with a greater number of places to buy or drink alcohol also had higher rates of domestic violence. That link held true even after the researchers accounted for factors such as local poverty and jobless rates.

But the association seen in the study does not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

"The studies that we reviewed do not indicate that alcohol outlet density or the outlets themselves cause partner violence," Dennis Reidy, a behavioral scientist at the CDC, said in a journal news release.

"However, our findings suggest that local regulation of alcohol outlet density may be able to reduce rates of intimate partner violence within a community," he added.

A number of states and communities in the United States have created laws to reduce excessive drinking. Many use licensing and zoning laws to limit the number of places where people can buy alcohol.

Other anti-drinking policies, such as higher prices and taxation and limiting the hours of operation of alcohol outlets don't appear to reduce intimate partner violence. The researchers said further study is needed to determine why that's the case.

Hartford – On July 24, 2009 at approximately 6:30 a.m. the Hartford Police Department Vice and Narcotics Detectives made a controlled purchase of illegal alcohol from the 24 Hour Super Deli located at 485 Albany Ave. The investigation is a result of numerous citizen complaints about quality of life that is affected from such activity.