



POSITION PAPER No. 8/214th Legislature (2010-11)

ISSUE:

Removes the two plenary retail distribution license limit for certain stores.

BILL NO.

S-1904 (Beach, Lesniak)

NCADD-NJ POSITION:

NCADD-New Jersey opposes S-1904 because more supermarkets will sell beer and wine if the two plenary retail distribution license limit is removed. This, in turn, will create more access to alcohol for underage persons, greater perceived availability of alcohol, and subject children to alcohol advertising, all of which have been shown to increase youth use of alcohol. An underage person going into a liquor store will be noticed and thus prevented from obtaining alcohol, but an underage person going into a supermarket will not be noticed.

Youth use of alcohol is a serious issue throughout New Jersey, and no other drug threatens as many of the nation's children as alcohol. It is linked to numerous social, emotional and behavioral problems. Most disturbingly, alcohol is implicated in the three top causes of teen deaths: accidents, homicide and suicide. Communities face multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth, including: violence, traffic crashes, high risk sex, criminal behavior, injury, medical care, work loss, pain and suffering, poisoning, psychosis, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and youth suicide.

Despite these deeply troubling consequences, alcohol continues to be New Jersey youths' number one drug of choice. New Jersey's youth use alcohol at rates that should alarm all concerned citizens in the

Garden State. Alcohol continues to be the most frequently used substance by New Jersey middle school and high school students. Almost 39% of New Jersey's middle school students have used alcohol in their lifetime, and 17.3% drank one or more drinks in the past 30 days. The average age students reported first engaging in regular use of alcohol was 12.5 years old.(i)

The statistics regarding high school students are even more alarming. Three quarters (74.6%) of high school students reported drinking alcohol in their lifetime, with 45 % having drunk one or more drinks of alcohol within the prior 30 days. Binge drinking increased for high school students between 2003 and 2009, with 24.2% (2003) and 27.1% (2009) having had five or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours.(ii)

The effects on young drinkers can be devastating when the physical effects of alcohol are coupled with emotional immaturity and inexperience. Alcohol alters and kills brain cells and can adversely affect an individual's ability to form new memories. Some intoxicated youth injure or kill themselves in fires, falls, boating accidents, or other tragedies that might well have been avoided if they were sober. Drinking can cause individuals to lose their inhibitions and lead them to engage in behavior they would probably not embrace if sober, such as violence, vandalism, sex, date rape, other criminal behavior, or drug use.

Reasons for the increase in alcohol consumption include the ease with which these young people can, or believe they can, obtain alcohol. Sixty-eight percent of 8th graders, 85% of 10th graders, and 95% of 12th graders say it is fairly easy to get alcohol.(iii) There is a direct correlation between perceived availability of alcohol and use. New Jersey middle school students who reported that it would be very easy to obtain alcohol and drugs also reported higher levels of use. The risk that teens will drink and get intoxicated increases sharply when access is easier or the



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perception exists that alcohol is readily available. This bill will increase the access young people have to alcohol and increase the perceived availability.

Children's attitudes and behaviors about alcohol are shaped by what they see and hear. Research shows that children's favorable attitudes toward alcohol are significantly related to their exposure to alcohol advertisements. When children's exposure to alcohol advertising increases they: perceive drinking as more attractive, acceptable and rewarding; view drinkers more positively (i.e., more friendly, relaxed, fun-loving, happy, sophisticated, etc.); are more likely to see beer drinking as, "cool" or "macho"; are more likely to believe that drinking is a way to relax and deal with stress; are more likely to agree that it is okay for teenagers to drink; are more likely to name alcohol than water as an appropriate beverage for adults; and have increased expectations to drink in the future.

As advocates for the prevention and treatment of alcoholism and other drug addiction, NCADD—NJ is firmly committed to reducing underage drinking and its devastating consequences. The dangers and devastating consequences of early alcohol use are crystal clear. The challenge is to effectively reduce and prevent underage drinking.

Research and experience have shown that successful alcohol prevention includes reducing the availability of alcohol and changing social norms. Simply put, that means making it harder for young people to get alcohol and reinforce the message that youth alcohol use is illegal and unacceptable they will drink less. This bill thwarts both of these objectives to reduce youth use of and access to alcohol

REFERENCES

- i The 2003 New Jersey Middle School Substance Use Survey conducted by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Division of Addiction Services
- ii Bloustein Center for Survey Research, New Jersey Student Health Survey, NJ Department of Education, 2009 p.10
- iii The American Medical Association office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Polls, 2005

CONTACT

Candice Singer, J.D.

Research Analyst

609.477.7013

csinger@ncaddnj.org

360 Corporate Blvd.

Robbinsville, NJ 08691

609.477.7000 (PH) | 609.689.3244 (FX)

POLICY@NCADDNJ.ORG