

New York: Memorandum in Opposition

Source: NYSPHA

Jun 15th

RE: A.7659 (Morelle)/S.5358 (O'Mara) - theWine Industry and Liquor Store Development Act.

Submitted on behalf of the New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA), the New York Alcohol Policy Alliance (NYAPA), and the Council on Addiction of New York State (CANYS).

The above organizations jointly and strongly oppose this legislation.

Expanding the sale of wine into grocery and drug stores in New York State is NOT in the public interest. While the expansion of the availability of wine and fortified wine has been characterized by its proponents as a matter of "convenience" and economic development, any short-term economic benefits engendered by this legislation would be far outweighed by the deleterious short- and long-term public health and public safety consequences.

Illegal Sales to Minors

The vast majority of new wine licenses would likely go to smaller corner stores, convenience stores, and bodegas - not to large supermarket chains. Those stores tend to be more likely than liquor stores to make illegal sales to minors. A 2007 study found that underage decoy purchase rates were "highest at convenience (38%) and grocery (36%) stores but were relatively low (14%) at other types of outlets (e.g., liquor and drug stores).

Cheap Fortified Wines

A wine license in New York State allows the merchant to sell cheap, sweetened, fortified wines such as Thunderbird, M/D "Mad Dog" 20/20, Night Train, Cisco, and Richard's Wild Irish Rose. These are often the preferred beverages of chronic public inebriates.

Expanding their distribution to corner stores, convenience stores, and bodegas would be potentially devastating to neighborhoods in New York State.

Harms to Population-Level Health

Expansion of wine sales would not only be a matter of increased "convenience," but would lead to higher levels of wine consumption and overall alcohol consumption:

§ Studies of wine sale expansion in other states (most due to privatization) found significant, long-term increases in wine sales, even after controlling for other factors (including overall alcohol consumption and national trends). These increases ranged from 15% (in New Hampshire) to 305% (for Maine).³ Iowa and West Virginia had increases in overall alcohol consumption.

§ The introduction of wine sales in grocery stores in New Zealand led to a 17% increase in wine sales and consumption.

§ The New York State Division of the Budget predicted that the wine expansion measure proposed in the 2009-2010 Executive Budget would result in an 18% growth in wine sales.

As the World Health Organization has definitively concluded, higher levels of societal alcohol consumption lead to more alcohol problems:

§ Alcohol is a factor in many of our most intractable and expensive health problems, including breast cancer,⁸ colorectal cancer,⁹ HIV/AIDS,¹⁰ intimate partner violence,¹¹ gang violence,¹² and child abuse and neglect.

A growth in alcohol problems would lead to higher medical, social services, and law enforcement costs, as well as decreased productivity:

§ Alcohol abuse/dependence contributes significantly to Medicaid hospital costs. Moreover, alcohol abuse is a prime risk factor for trauma - the leading killer of Americans aged 1 to 44 - and is associated with both increased trauma center costs and with readmission for new trauma to Level 1 trauma centers. Alcohol-related problems are responsible for 20-30% of all emergency room visits.

§ The cost of alcohol-related crime in the US in 1999 was approximately \$84 billion, more than double the amount attributable to illicit drugs (\$38 billion).

§ Alcohol abuse/dependence contributes significantly to lost productivity in the U.S. workforce.²⁰ Additionally, about 20% of US workers have either been endangered, had to work harder, or have had to "cover" due to the

drinking of a co-worker.

Furthermore, the health benefits of wine are often misunderstood and overstated. In reality, fewer than 20% of American wine drinkers imbibe at levels that yield health benefits. In addition, wine drinking nations such as France and Italy continue to experience rates of liver cirrhosis that are much higher than the US, Canada, and Northern Europe due to higher per capita consumption of alcohol.

For these reasons, the New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA), the New York Alcohol Policy Alliance (NYAPA), and the Council on Addiction of New York State (CANYS) respectfully submit that A.7659/S.5358 is substantially and fundamentally flawed, and should see no further consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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