



Chair Wilde, Vice Chairs Lively and Leif, and members of the committee:

Oregon Recovers strongly opposes HB 3194 and urges the committee to vote no.

Oregon Recovers is a coalition of people in recovery like myself, friends and family members of people experiencing addiction and the folks in the workforce who are on the front lines of the addiction crisis providing critical treatment and recovery support services. Our mission is to end Oregon's addiction crisis by transforming the state's fractured and incomplete addiction recovery health care system into a recovery-based continuum of care that recognizes addiction as a chronic health condition that requires a lifetime of support.

Oregon is facing one of the worst addiction crises in the nation, which is largely driven by alcohol. We have 3rd highest untreated addiction rate in the nation, the 4th highest alcohol use disorder rate, and rank virtually last in access to treatment. Alcohol-related death is the 3rd leading cause of preventable death in Oregon and alcohol kills five times as many people as all drug overdoses combined--a rate that has increased 34% in the last 21 years.

Just last week, Oregon Health Authority and ECONorthwest released an interim report of economic harms caused by excessive alcohol use, or binge drinking. They found that Oregon's total costs of excessive drinking were approximately **\$4.8 billion** in 2019.

HB 3194 would allow stores to sell "cocktails in a can" or, as they're known in the public health field "alcopops". These are sugary, 8-14% alcoholic beverages that pose an especially high risk for young people.

According to Alcohol Justice, an alcohol policy and advocacy group in CA, even though "alcopops comprise a small fraction of total U.S. alcohol market share, a major study found 50% of youth drinkers age 13-20 report drinking alcopops. This included 43% of 13-15 year old drinkers, 49% of 16-18 year old drinkers, and 52% of 19-20 year old drinkers."

Furthermore, "a recent study surveying more than 1,000 youth drinkers confirmed that alcopops are associated with alcohol-related harm among youth ages 13-20. Youth drinkers who consumed alcopops:

- Drank more alcohol per day and drank on more days per month.
- Were four times more likely to engage in binge drinking.

- Engaged in more physical fights.
- Received more alcohol-related injuries and obtained more injuries that necessitated medical attention.

Though the alcohol industry insists that alcopops are made and marketed only for individuals of legal drinking age, research indicates that alcopops are extremely popular among youth age 20 and younger. About half of youth drinkers report drinking alcopops, compared to only 16-20% of adults. Youth are twice as likely as adults to consume brands such as Smirnoff (Diageo) and Bacardi Malt Beverages (Bacardi)."

These products are often sold in bright, neon packaging and cartoon designs that are more commonly associated with sodas and their marketing strategies are disturbingly reminiscent of the marketing strategies employed by big tobacco to get young people to start smoking. In fact there is a whole body of academic studies looking at the predatory nature of cocktail in a can marketing.

Allowing these products onto the shelves of our markets in better times would be bad public policy, but to allow the sale of products that are proven to harm our young people during an unprecedented addiction crisis is irresponsible. We respectfully urge members of this committee not to support HB 3194. I would also urge the committee to bring Oregon Health Authority into this conversation to ensure that we balance the health of Oregonian families with economic prosperity.

That all being said, I do want to mention the Grocers have been more than willing to engage Oregon Recovers in conversations about this proposal and other parts of their legislative agenda and we appreciate the opportunity to continue the dialogue.

Sources:

<http://alcoholjustice.org/images//reports/AlcopopsReportFinalWeb.pdf>

[https://www.oregonrecovers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OHA-Alcohol-Harms-Interim-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.oregonrecovers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OHA-Alcohol-Harms-Interim-Report_FINAL.pdf)