

Submitter: Michele Bradfute

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3197

Dear Chair Prosanski, Chair Kropf, Co-Chair Manning, and members of the Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response

My name is Michele Bradfute and as someone who cares deeply about the health and future of our youth, I urge you to support HB 3197. I firmly believe this legislation would be a powerful step toward addressing one of the most pressing issues facing our community: underage drinking.

Teen alcohol use is a critical issue that affects the health, safety, and well-being of our young people. According to research, the earlier a person begins drinking, the higher the risk they will experience long-term health problems, including alcohol dependency, mental health challenges, and difficulties in school or in their personal relationships. In Oregon, like many other states, the consequences of underage drinking are felt far and wide. It contributes to a range of issues including alcohol-related accidents, violence, and even fatalities—many of which are entirely preventable.

By taxing alcohol sales, we can raise the necessary funds to implement effective prevention strategies that focus specifically on youth. These programs are crucial in educating young people about the dangers of alcohol and providing them with the tools they need to make informed, healthy decisions. Prevention efforts have proven to be cost-effective, not only in reducing underage drinking but also in reducing related issues such as youth violence, unsafe sexual behavior, and academic struggles.

The research is clear: prevention works. By investing in evidence-based programs, such as school-based education, community outreach, and skill-building initiatives, we can decrease the likelihood that teens will engage in risky behavior. In doing so, we are not only protecting their immediate health but also ensuring that they have the opportunity to grow into productive, successful adults who contribute to the wellbeing of our state.

Furthermore, it's important to recognize that this proposed tax would not place an undue burden on Oregon's general population. Alcohol taxes are an effective and fair way to raise revenue because they are directly tied to consumption—those who purchase alcohol would be contributing to the prevention efforts that can directly benefit their communities. This approach has been successfully implemented in other

states, and the results speak for themselves: a reduction in youth alcohol use, fewer alcohol-related incidents, and a greater overall investment in public health.

As a community, we have an obligation to protect our young people. They are the future of Oregon, and we must ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge and resources they need to make choices that will safeguard their futures. By taxing alcohol sales and using the funds for teen prevention programs, we are not only taking a stand against underage drinking, but we are also making an investment in a healthier, brighter future for all Oregonians.

I urge you to support this important measure. Let us come together to take meaningful action to protect the next generation from the dangers of underage drinking.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Michele Bradfute BS, CADC II
Northwest Family Services