

Submitter: Sue-Li Cushman
On Behalf Of: Columbia Distributing
Committee: Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety
Response
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3197

Opposition to House Bill 3197

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your service. I appreciate the opportunity to share my strong opposition to House Bill 3197.

My name is Sue-Li Cushman, and I work for Columbia Distributing. I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact the pandemic has had on Oregon's restaurant and beverage industry. Over 70 local breweries, taprooms, and brewpubs have already been lost, and with inflation, supply chain disruptions, and labor shortages continuing to strain our businesses, an additional 8% alcohol sales tax will only push more establishments over the edge. This tax will force further closures, result in job losses, and drive up costs for consumers already facing financial hardship.

Proponents of HB 3197 argue that this measure is about saving lives rather than profits. However, we should not frame public health and the well-being of working families as mutually exclusive goals. Despite alcohol taxes being one of the state's largest revenue sources, only 3% of these funds support addiction and recovery services. Instead of imposing new, regressive taxes, lawmakers should direct millions from existing funds to aggressively support youth addiction services and strengthen our public health initiatives.

Oregon's beverage industry is more than just numbers—it is about people. It represents small business owners who have risked everything to follow their passion, as well as the hardworking bartenders, delivery drivers, and local brewers who form the backbone of our communities. At the hearing, I saw not corporate interests, but everyday Oregonians fighting to preserve their livelihoods. HB 3197 threatens these neighbors at a time when they need support the most.

Oregon has long championed small businesses and local industries. This bill undermines that legacy by imposing a burden on the very people who make our state unique. I urge you to reject HB 3197 and to adopt policies that truly protect both public health and the economic vitality of Oregon's communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Sue-Li Cushman