



THE MARYLAND COLLABORATIVE

TO REDUCE COLLEGE DRINKING AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Testimony in favor of SB 172, Health Equity Resource Act
Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 27, 2021

As members of the Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems, and as leaders of colleges and universities across the state, we are writing to express our strong support of SB 172, the Maryland Health Equity Resource Act. This legislation would increase the state alcohol tax by a penny per dollar to fund Health Equity Resource Communities (HERCs), which research has shown, is one of the most effective ways to reduce excessive alcohol use, especially among young people. These HERCs will receive funds to support programs that seek to reduce health inequities based on race, ethnicity, disability, and geographic location.

Following the state's alcohol sales tax increase in 2011, Maryland saw a 26 percent drop in underage drinking and a 28% drop in underage binge drinking.¹ The number of alcohol-positive drivers between the ages of 15 and 34 on Maryland's roadways fell by 12 percent.² A systematic review of 50 studies support these results, finding that increased prices and taxes of alcoholic beverages were associated with decreased alcohol-related harms, including violence, suicide, motor-vehicle crashes, sexually-transmitted diseases, drug use, and crime.³ Furthermore, research among college students has found higher beer taxes to be associated with reductions in several indicators of violence, including damaging property, getting into a fight or argument, and sexually being taken advantage of or taking advantage of someone else.⁴ We are pleased that Maryland has made such progress in reducing the prevalence and impact of underage drinking in previous years, and with your support, SB 172 will ensure that these improvements continue in future years while also generating funds through the sales tax increase to reduce health disparities in our state.

Our state takes well-justified pride in its commitment to education. Our students come to college with high hopes and dreams; excessive drinking and its related harms can deter the fulfillment of those dreams. Please vote in favor of SB 172 and support the health, safety, and success of our college students.

Sincerely,

¹ Keshia Pollack Porter, Shannon Frattaroli, and Harpreet Pannu. "Public Health Policy in Maryland: Lessons from Recent Alcohol and Cigarette Tax Policies." *The Abell Report* 31, no. 2 (2018): 1-20.

² Marie-Claude Lavoie, Patricia Langenberg, Andres Villaveces, Patricia C. Dischinger, Linda Simoni-Wastila, Kathleen Hoke, and Gordon S. Smith. "Effect of Maryland's 2011 Alcohol Sales Tax Increase on Alcohol-Positive Driving." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 53, no. 1 (2017): 17-24. Accessed 2017/05/14. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.12.011>.

³ Wagenaar AC, Tobler AL, Komro KA. Effects of alcohol tax and price policies on morbidity and mortality: A systematic review. *Am J Public Health*. 2010;100(11):2270-2278.

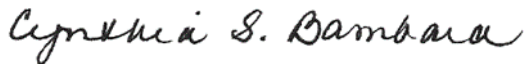
⁴ Grossman M, Markowitz S. *Alcohol regulation and violence on college campuses*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research; 1999. NBER working paper 7129. Available at: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w7129>.



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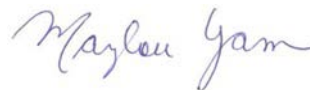
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