



House Economic Matters Committee
February 19, 2021

House Bill 996
Alcoholic Beverages – Class A Licenses – Retail Grocery Establishments

Oppose

NCADD-Maryland respectfully opposes *House Bill 996 - Alcoholic Beverages – Class A Licenses – Retail Grocery Establishments*. This legislation would increase the number of alcohol outlets throughout the state for off-premises drinking by almost two-fold. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that high alcohol outlet density is known to be an environmental risk factor for excessive drinking. Based on strong scientific evidence of intervention efficacy, they recommend using public policy to limit, not expand, alcohol outlet density.¹ Excessive drinking in turn leads to increases in violence, criminal activity, domestic violence, and child maltreatment.

It is also true that with an increase in alcohol outlets, the opportunity for people under the age of 21 to purchase alcohol increases. There have been studies that show that reducing the commercial availability of alcohol as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy can contribute to a reduction in underage drinking and alcohol-related problems.² Research has also shown that liquor stores do a much better job than grocery stores in checking identification of people purchasing alcohol. We know the harms that result from underage drinking are far reaching, contributing to negative consequences including injuries, sexual assaults, and deaths.

While the subtitle and preamble to this bill imply that the goal of the bill is to promote healthy eating and reduce obesity, increasing the sale of alcohol will accomplish neither. The consumption of alcohol is associated with the development of adult obesity.³ There are many other policies and practices the State could embrace to address obesity, especially with regard to young people.

We ask for an unfavorable report.

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/pdfs/CDC-Guide-for-Measuring-Alcohol-Outlet-Density.pdf>

² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6560131_Alcohol_Outlet_Characteristics_and_Alcohol_Sales_to_Youth_Results_of_Alcohol_Purchase_Surveys_in_45_Oregon_Communities

³ <https://iard.org/getattachment/e8599ddc-395f-48f4-910d-f3d5fd4ae67d/hr-obesity1.pdf>