



Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists

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To: Illinois State Senators and Representatives

From: The Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists - AAIM
Rita Kreslin, Executive Director

Re: HB0494 – LIQUOR – UNDER 21 AT RESTAURANTS

The recent focus on proposed House Bill (HB) 0494 and serving liquor to minors is of great concern to the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists (AAIM) as it relates to risks associated with underage drinking. AAIM is opposed to the provisions in HB 0494 allowing individuals under 21 years of age to consume alcohol under the direct supervision and approval of his or her parent on the premises of a restaurant.

According to the American Medical Association, research shows that alcohol affects a developing teenage brain differently than an adult brain. “The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence, and alcohol can seriously damage long – and short-term growth processes.” The brain goes through rapid development from the ages of 12 through the early 20s. Medical studies indicate the regular use of alcohol before age 21 is associated with long-term cognitive impairment and a greater incidence of chronic alcohol addiction.

HB 0494 sends mixed messages to our youth regarding the challenges they face in making positive choices related to their use of alcohol. Numerous health and safety related coalitions have worked tirelessly to support parents across the country to positively influence young people to remain alcohol-free until age 21 in hope to decrease and prevent negative incidents related to under drinking, including impaired driving.

While in years past, society looked at underage drinking as a rite of passage, today we know better. We understand the long-term health risks and the devastation that one wrong decision can make in someone's life. The threats facing teenagers are real and differ from person to person. According to a study sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the percentage of 8th graders who reported using alcohol in the past 30 days was 14%, 10th graders 29% and 12th graders 41%.

Since 1982, AAIM has been providing various programs to bring awareness to the dangers of drunk driving and underage drinking. Our efforts include assisting impaired driving crash victims and their families emotionally, financially and during our proceedings. AAIM urges you not to erase years of progress that has encouraged many adolescents to make positive choices and thrive in their community.

Finally, one of our goals is to empower young adults and teenagers to make positive decisions in their lives. By working together, we have a much better chance of decreasing alcohol and drug-related incidents of our youth, and discouraging behavior that puts themselves and others at risk of permanent harm or death.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice AAIM's concerns and opposition to HB 0494.