

April 23, 2018

The Honorable Senators and Representative of the 30th Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska
99801-1182

Dear Legislators,

There is a critically important piece of legislation before you that we hope receives your attention and sees passage before your upcoming adjournment. We are writing in support of SB76, the Title 4 rewrite bill. SB76 and companion bill HB357 update the statutes governing Alaska's alcohol laws, which haven't been updated since the 1980s. This legislation is the product of a six-year collaboration that engaged over 100 stakeholders, including people from every level of the alcohol industry, public health, substance use prevention and treatment providers, local governments, police, advocates for youth, and more. This bill offers a consensus-based set of recommendations that address current problems in law, and creates a better framework to address future issues in the law.

Many pages of the bill simply reorganizes current Title 4, aligning penalties with the various populations they impact and putting all the license types in one section, making it more user friendly for the public and easier to administer for the Alcohol and Marijuana Control Office. There are also critical changes to statute that need to be passed this year in order to create a safer, more equitable environment.

Recommendations are geared to promoting a fair business climate while protecting public health and safety, creating rational regulation for all tiers of the state's alcohol industry, limiting youth access to alcohol, promoting responsible alcohol use and reducing the harms of overconsumption, and implementing updates without negatively impacting businesses and responsible operators. The changes offer practical solutions for some of Alaska's long-standing problems related to alcohol.

- SB76/HB 357 increase fees for alcohol licenses, which will generate additional revenue for the state and for individual communities who receive a portion of the revenue for local law enforcement.**

Many of these fees have not been increased since the 1980s. Additionally, increased fees will generate revenue for the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board to be able to effectively perform compliance checks, educate businesses and communities about our laws, and better enforce the state's alcohol laws.

- SB76/HB 357 give the state additional tools for controlling Internet sales of alcohol and holds businesses accountable for following state rules.**

This is necessary to respect our local option communities' decision to restrict alcohol, and to keep alcohol out of the hands of minors. Alaska is one of the only states with no regulation of Internet sales of alcohol. This means anyone, including a young person or a person in a local option community that has banned alcohol, can freely order alcohol online from any business willing to ship to them.

- SB76/HB 357 support better enforcement of alcohol laws, as well as more education to businesses and communities about following the laws and operating responsibly.**

Alcohol is a major factor in many crimes committed in Alaska, including domestic violence and child maltreatment. Having a well-regulated alcohol industry that understands and follows the laws is part of the solution.

- **SB76/HB 357 hold businesses with alcohol sales licenses immediately accountable if an employee serves a minor or overserves someone who's already intoxicated.**

This gives business owners more financial incentive to make sure their employees are trained and following state laws.

- **SB76/HB 357 streamline the alcohol licensing system.**

The bill eliminates the unintended consequences of creating new specialty license types and more outlets for alcohol, and keeps population limits on the number of retail outlets per community. Limiting the number of alcohol outlets per capita has been proven to reduce violence, crime, and injuries in those communities.

It is a rare day when public health and safety advocates are aligned with the alcohol industry. The solutions found in SB76 came only after many hours across the table from one another, week after week, until we found common ground. There is no doubt further work to do on Title 4, but we must start with these consensus-based recommendations, and we must act as quickly as possible. Please pass SB76 this year.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Diane Kaplan
Rasmuson Foundation



Dale Fox
Alaska CHARR