



March 30, 2011

House Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 125 Moving the ABC Board to DCCED

Dear House Finance Committee member,

On behalf of the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, we would like to first thank the sponsor for his dedication and work to improving the services systems that address the needs of Alaskan families and vulnerable populations (such as seniors and the disabled). We hope to present this letter as an opportunity to share the board's perspective on HB 125.

We agree that there are ways to promote a better working relationship between the alcoholic beverage industry (manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, etc.) and the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to achieve the common goal of fair and responsible enforcement of the laws governing alcoholic beverages. However, we respectfully disagree that a move of the ABC Board to the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development is the best solution.

As you know, the misuse and abuse of alcoholic beverages are major contributors to crime, violence, and family dysfunction in Alaska. This, in turn, drives many of the costs suffered by the State and our communities – in public safety, corrections, schools, child protection, and other areas.

- Alaska's rate of alcohol-induced deaths is 3 times the national average at 22.5/100,000.
- Nationally, 1/3 of suicide victims test positive for alcohol. In Alaska, of suicide deaths tested for drugs and alcohol, 44% had alcohol in their system at the time of death.
- In 2009, 22% of high school students surveyed reported binge drinking in the previous month.
- The American Medical Association reports that underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen car crashes, which are the leading cause of death among teenagers.
- Youth who begin drinking before the age of 14 are more likely to develop dependence.
- An estimated 1,000 adolescents are dependent on alcohol.
- An estimated 19,000 Alaskan adults are dependent on alcohol.

Unfortunately, alcohol is the drug of choice for youth and adults. Alaskans have expressed support for strong enforcement of alcoholic beverage laws, to our board as well as in other

venues. Therefore, we support effective regulation and control of alcoholic beverages as imperative to the State's efforts to address costly social problems.

The retailers of alcoholic beverages in Alaska invest time, energy, and money to ensure that only lawful sales are made – whether to youth or to adults. Many retailers have strong histories of responsible sales practices and community efforts to promote responsible consumption. Those efforts should not be minimized. In fact, we have been fortunate to partner with the Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailer's Association in the area of FASD prevention and awareness.

We want to be careful not to characterize this as an issue of being for or against alcohol or the businesses that sell alcohol. The issue is how does Alaska best continue efforts to control the sale and possession of alcoholic beverages. We would respectfully submit that moving the ABC Board is not the most effective way, but instead focus on ways to promote better collaboration and shared responsibility between retailers and the ABC Board.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let me know if there are ways our board could work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kate Burkhart", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

J. Kate Burkhart
Executive Director