

MADD TESTAMONY
Prepared by Rebecca Shaver – MADD Regional Executive Director
Majority Policy Committee

Public Hearing

Divestiture of the retail Sale of Wine and Hard Liquor

April 18, 2007 – 9:00 – 11:00

Room 8 East Wing, Hearing room A

Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on behalf of MADD, our many dedicated volunteers and staff but most importantly, on behalf of victims and survivors of the violent crime of DUI. Pennsylvania ranked 4th in the nation for alcohol related deaths in 2005. In light of yesterday's horrific, senseless, violent loss of innocent lives, I can't help but reflect upon the horrific, senseless, violent loss of life that takes place on Pennsylvania's highways every day. 636 people in Pennsylvania were killed in alcohol related crashes in 2005 – that would be 53 preventable deaths per month! Those deaths don't offer the same emotional impact because they were spread out over the month and received probably a short article in the local newspaper - soon to be forgotten – it was only drunk driving, or alcohol poisoning! They were only drinking – not loading a gun planning to kill someone! We have become de-sensitized by crime related to alcohol. They were only drinking! However innocent 53 people are still dead every month in our Commonwealth.

I must admit I have a grave concern for our commonwealth's health, safety and well being of our children. MADD's mantra – don't drink and drive – we say it but do we really mean it, when Pennsylvania is offering an ever growing opportunity for the purchase and consumption of alcohol in every manner of sales outlet – especially those markets where people stop for travel needs and gas and take the family for groceries. Increase availability results in increase consumption. Increased consumption relates to more crashes, more addiction problems, more health problems, more violent crime, more burden and stress on our family structure.

Where MADD is not against the consumption of alcohol, MADD is looking for and concerned about balance as it relates to the availability, sale and consumption of alcohol. Research tells us that 4 out of 10 families have a member with addiction problems.

Will there be funds available for treatment? Once a six pack or bottle of wine or scotch leaves the shelves – do we care about the possible consequences? Many of us do.....The responsibility of selling alcohol goes well beyond the financial aspect but also extends into legal liability. Will the vendors be trained in proper ID identification and recognition? Will there be money set aside for alcohol education?

Our jails and prisons are full – and some will say that the non-violent DUI offender is the reason for that. (Show photo of Mother) The woman that was speeding, ran a red light with a BAC of .176 at 12:20 in the afternoon with three children in the van didn't mean to hit us – but she did and it was traumatic and it was preventable and it was violent! She didn't care about the safety of her own children much less for my elderly parents and me who just happened to be in her line of fire.

According to the 1997 and 2002 Economic Census; done by the US Census Bureau –

In Pennsylvania: Beer, wine and liquor stores generated:

- \$1.4 billion in 1997
- \$2.2 billion in 2002 (I would venture that number has tripled by now)
- And...we are the 5th largest alcohol economy in the US! We paid for that dubious honor with 635 lives – not to mention the thousands injured.

What MADD is saying is, please, think beyond the sale – think beyond the potential financial gain – think about potential problems down the road and how the Commonwealth will handle these problems. MADD is looking for a balance and a plan– we are not prohibitionists – put safe guards in place before rather than later. We ask that the Current System of Control be maintained for the common good of Pennsylvania.

MADD's concerns go far beyond this discussion of Privatization or Divestiture. Longer hours of operation, out of control advertising that targets youth, unlimited free drinks in casinos and clever marketing gimmicks such as the new “Spykes” continue to make our work at MADD challenging to say the least. Privatization would exasperate existing alcohol related problems.

As long as innocent people are being killed and injured in preventable, violent, crashes – MADD will be their voice....Be assured that we will continue to implement our campaigns to heighten awareness against drunk driving, we will continue to work with youth to prevent underage drinking and sadly, we will continue to provide support and compassion to devastated families in the aftermath of tragedy.

Thank you, Senator Corman, for inviting MADD to offer comments at this hearing.

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