



THE MARYLAND COLLABORATIVE

TO REDUCE COLLEGE DRINKING AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Testimony of Ayelet Hines

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on Statewide Civil Social Host bill (SB 209)

January 29, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 209, Unruly Social Gatherings - Civil Penalties. On behalf of sixteen college and university presidents in The Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems, I thank you for your leadership in passing a ban on the sale of powdered alcohol two years ago and banning the sale of 190 proof alcohol in 2014. The college presidents urge you to continue to protect the health and safety of young people in Maryland and the livability of our communities by supporting this legislation allowing law enforcement to write a civil citation – similar to a speeding ticket – to the host of a loud unruly party. Behaviors that can trigger a citation include underage drinking or excessive noise, unruly crowds, blocking sidewalks or streets, public drunkenness, vandalism, littering, assaults, or other behavior threatening public health and safety.

The leadership of Maryland's colleges and universities recognizes that excessive drinking is a significant problem that can compromise student success and safety: in Maryland, about one in five college students meets the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse, and nearly one in ten have suffered assaults or property damage due to someone else's drinking. Maryland college students who drank at an off-campus house party are at higher risk than their peers: in the past month they were three times more likely to injure someone, damage property, perform poorly on a test or project, or get in trouble with campus police, compared to those who did not. They were also twice as likely to miss class and get in trouble with off-campus police, and more than 1.5 times as likely to ride with a drinking driver, experience sexual misconduct, or have unprotected sex¹.

The unruly social gatherings law has been an effective tool to reduce problems related to excessive drinking at house parties in Baltimore City, College Park, Frostburg, Princess Anne, and part of Baltimore County. These jurisdictions have seen

- reductions in calls for service related to large house parties, and
- reductions in excessive drinking at house parties among college students.

Two jurisdictions saw a 70% drop in complaint calls for excessive noise. College campuses where civil social host ordinances are in effect have seen a significant reduction in the number of students who report drinking at off-campus house parties and in the number of students who engage in binge drinking overall.

Under current state law, police options for responding to loud and unruly parties are limited. Providing alcohol to a minor is a criminal offense, difficult to prove, and often dismissed by the courts. It's no surprise the law is seldom used. These local ordinances have allowed police to easily write a civil citation to the host of a loud and unruly party, similar to a speeding ticket. Penalties in this bill include fines of \$250 and \$500 for a first and subsequent offense. Landlords are issued a warning on a first offense and can be ordered to pay a fine on subsequent offenses unless they didn't know about the party and have taken steps to terminate the tenancy.

Whether a community experiences loud, unruly parties in rentals around college campuses or in private homes where parents provide alcohol or turn a blind eye, SB 209 would help protect young people across the state by giving law enforcement additional, optional tools.

Thank you to the committee for hearing this bill, to Sen. West for your leadership, and for your interest in the health and safety of Maryland's young people.

¹ Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems. High-risk drinking among college students in Maryland: Identifying targets for intervention; 2014.