



*MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.*

**HB 1072 Sales and Use Tax - Alcoholic Beverages - Rate Alteration**

**FAVORABLE** House Ways and Means Committee. February 27, 2024.

Honorable Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the committee,

Alcohol use is the fifth leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. (NIAAA)

**The most cost-effective activities for cessation and reducing alcohol use are increased alcohol taxes and restrictions on alcohol availability.** (WHO)

**Alcohol use in the U.S. costs society an average of \$2.05 a drink,** or \$249 billion in 2010 (CDC).

Taxes should actually be much higher than 10% to more closely reflect true costs, and to reduce costs and suffering associated with excess alcohol use.

Alcohol has become more affordable since its federal excise tax was last set in 1991. (Humphreys)

Estimates of how responsive alcohol purchasing is to price changes vary, but **even the more conservative estimates indicate that declining prices account for most of the increase in alcohol consumption a year.** (Humphreys) (Nelson)

**Higher alcohol taxes reduce alcohol demand overall, particularly among lower income drinkers, and particularly among those with harmful patterns of drinking.** (Jiang)

Alcohol use led to more than 140,000 deaths and 3.6 million years of potential life lost each year in the United States from 2015 – 2019, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 26 years.

**Alcohol use was responsible for 1 in 5 deaths among adults aged 20-49 years.** (CDC)

Problems associated with alcohol use include high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, digestive problems, cancer (of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, voice box, liver, colon, and rectum), dementia, poor school performance, depression, anxiety, social and family problems, unemployment, impaired immune function, and alcohol use disorder. (CDC)

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The alcohol industry depends on sales to individuals who drink heavily, which is associated with harms. In higher income countries (like the U.S.), **approximately 50% of alcohol sales are to individuals with heavier drinking episodes.** (Casswell). As a result, effective health policy advocacy predictably generates resistance by alcohol industries. (Caswell).

We respectfully request a favorable report.

Joseph A. Adams, MD, FASAM, internal medicine and addiction medicine

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