



***NORTH AVENUE AND HILTON STREET
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY TASK FORCE***
3001 NORTH AVENUE
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21216

RE: SENATE BILL 935 – BILL ENTITLED - Baltimore City
Alcoholic Beverages -- West North Avenue Corridor – Restrictions

Dear Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

The North Avenue and Hilton Street Business and Community Taskforce, its members and Board of Directors overwhelmingly support SB 935.

While it might not cure all our community ills, this measure will signal a strong united front regarding the perception and expectation we wish to set for the future forward progress of our neighborhoods. Our desire is not to prevent certain business owners from gaining a livelihood, but to reduce the disproportionality of certain establishments that are strategically positioned in impoverished communities.

For example, there are approximately 14 liquor stores surrounding the Walbrook Area, starting from Bloomingdale and West North Avenue going down to Edmondson Avenue. Then traveling back up Poplar Grove Street to W. North Avenue. This includes the store in the 3100 Block of West North Avenue. More specifically, the liquor store at the corner of Westwood Avenue and Bloomingdale adds to the loitering at Tiffany Square located across from this store. From 8 am in the morning until late evening at least 15 to 20 people are gathered participating in gross alcohol and drug use. The square was built as a memorial to honor the life of 6-year-old Tiffany Smith, killed amidst a drug shoot out in 1991. An excerpt from a 2008 Baltimore Sun article by Peter Herman, "Another innocent victim of the slaughter, another memory desecrated" describes this scene vividly.

The drug dealers swarmed around Tiffany Square. "Kill Bill, middle of the block," came the clarion call from the man in a blue winter cap and tan coat, slinging heroin named after the blood-thirsty movie of a revenge-bent killing spree. "Down there, the car at the light," one of the spotters yelled toward a customer.

This scene isn't from 1991, when 6-year-old Tiffany Smith, playing with a doll, was struck in the head by a stray bullet fired during a shootout between rival drug dealers, the start of a decade of drug violence from which the city has yet to recover. This was yesterday at 11:30 a.m., around a triangular patch of land where Bloomingdale Road crosses Westwood Avenue and Rosedale Street. Tiffany was killed here 17 years ago in July, and an outraged community named the spot in her honor. A red sign still stands with the name, "Tiffany Square."

During the summer months this activity begins even earlier and extends into late night.

The Gateway Apartments situated on W. North Avenue between Rosedale and Longwood are particularly impacted by the loitering and criminal activity. Residents have reported fear of existing the parking lot because of the frequent violence on North Avenue and the Square. As well, several of the stores have been reported as open air drug markets.

Police presence has been at the liquor store at the corner of Poplar Grove Street and West North Avenue on more than one occasion. This store was closed and reopened. People hang in front at night. Our councilman has spoken to the owner during two neighborhood walks.



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The Braddish and W North Avenue Street liquor store is a public safety hazard as well. There was a murder in that area at 1 pm in the afternoon in the summer of 2019. Construction workers at the new apartment at the intersection have expressed fear due to the drug traffic in and around this establishment.

Additionally, another continuous problem is that the zoning department is providing inadequate or in most cases no notice to residents or community associations prior to approving or transferring license(s) for such establishments.

These are only a few examples of the dysfunctionality such establishments help to facilitate.

We have liquor stores, tobacco and grocery stores (that don't sell groceries) and carry outs in abundance but no supermarkets with healthy foods. This is not what you find in more affluent Baltimore City communities. This is not a normal nor diversified representation of a community. The loiterers in front of and inside of these stores are mostly young males engaged in illicit activity. While many of our merchants are great corporate partners with an interest for the well-being of the community, there are several whom allow this type of behavior to exist and who may in fact be complicit actors in these activities.

The North Avenue Corridor is a main thoroughfare into the City and a major transit and travel means for our school age youth and honest working citizens. The increased loitering and illicit activity that the oversaturation of such establishments draws to poor and black and brown communities adds to the trauma and dysfunction our youth, families, and communities. Most of our communities are already inundated with alcoholism, substance abuse, mental health issues, and other health disparities. This is a public health crisis that has been allowed to exist for far too long.

Respectfully,

Crystal Jackson Parker, President
The NATF Board of Directors