



**Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 4, 2022**

**Senate Bill 603
Constitutional Amendment - Beer and Wine Licenses - Retail Grocery Establishments
Oppose**

NCADD-Maryland respectfully opposes *Senate Bill 603 - Constitutional Amendment - Beer and Wine Licenses - Retail Grocery Establishments*. This legislation would increase the number of alcohol outlets throughout the state for off-premises drinking by almost two-fold. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that high alcohol outlet density is known to be an environmental risk factor for excessive drinking. Based on strong scientific evidence of intervention efficacy, they recommend using public policy to limit, not expand, alcohol outlet density.¹ Excessive drinking in turn leads to increases in violence, criminal activity, domestic violence, and child maltreatment.

It is also true that with an increase in alcohol outlets, the opportunity for people under the age of 21 to purchase alcohol increases. There have been studies that show that reducing the commercial availability of alcohol as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy can contribute to a reduction in underage drinking and alcohol-related problems.² Research has also shown that liquor stores do a much better job than grocery stores in checking identification of people purchasing alcohol. We know the harms that result from underage drinking are far reaching, contributing to negative consequences including injuries, sexual assaults, and deaths.

In legislation passed in 2019 (Chapter 12), the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission was charged with developing best practices in several areas, including "the development of a public health impact statement for all changes to the State alcoholic beverages laws." We look forward to this kind of reporting on a regular bases on this and other bills. In the meantime, we ask for an unfavorable report.

The Maryland Affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD-Maryland) is a statewide organization that works to influence public and private policies on addiction, treatment, and recovery, reduce the stigma associated with the disease, and improve the understanding of addictions and the recovery process. We advocate for and with individuals and families who are affected by alcoholism and drug addiction.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/pdfs/CDC-Guide-for-Measuring-Alcohol-Outlet-Density.pdf>

² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6560131_Alcohol_Outlet_Characteristics_and_Alcohol_Sales_to_Youth_Results_of_Alcohol_Purchase_Surveys_in_45_Oregon_Communities