



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

SB 618 Baltimore City – Alcoholic Beverages – Sales in Grocery Stores and Supermarkets - Referendum

Hearing Date: 3/4/22

Committee: EHEA

Position: Unfavorable

Thank you, Chairman Pinsky, Vice-chair Kagan, and members of the EHEA Committee for holding this hearing on a voter referendum to allow beer and wine to be sold in chain stores, supermarkets, and discount houses. The Maryland Public Health Association’s Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis Network urges an unfavorable report on this bill.

Passing a law like this through a voter referendum like this could lead to a massive increase in licenses in a short time period. Every Royal Farms, Highs, Safeway, etc, is automatically eligible for a license. Research consistently demonstrates that increased alcohol outlet density, especially for off-premise outlets (i.e., those who sell unopened containers), is associated with an increase in a number of harms, including violence, criminal activity, domestic violence, and child maltreatment. It is also very costly; a recent study in Baltimore City demonstrated that alcohol-related harms cost \$582 million each year, almost 40% of which the government is responsible for. Alcohol consumption has been steadily rising nationally, especially for women and minorities; as consumption rises, so do alcohol-related harms.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on SB 618.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.