



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

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**SB962: Anne Arundel County – Alcoholic Beverages Licenses – Residency Requirement**

**Hearing Date: March 21, 2023**

**Committee: Finance**

**Position: Letter of information**

The Maryland Public Health Association’s Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis Network submits this letter of information urging legislators to consider the purpose of local residency requirements for alcoholic beverage licenses. We urge the committee to inquire as to whether the Anne Arundel liquor board and staff, those actually charged with enforcement of local laws, are in favor of this legislation or not.

Through the situation leading up to Prohibition, Prohibition itself, and eventually repeal, there was a national consensus that alcohol could not and should not be left up to the ordinary rules of the marketplace.

The public health harms, including death and injury resulting from excessing drinking, to social destabilization from crime, poverty, and violence, are what guide our organized regulatory system today. Essentially one of the main goals of regulation, as it says in our Maryland Code, is “to promote temperance...for the protection, health, welfare, and safety of the people.”

As alcohol availability increases, consumption increases, leading to increases in negative outcomes from its use. The goal after Prohibition was not to prohibit its use again, but to minimize harms from excessive drinking through reasonable regulations. That task was given to the states, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach did not take into account the local variations of use and misuse across the country.

This brings us to residency requirements. This ensures that retailers have a connection to the communities that they serve. Prior to Prohibition, communities were plagued by outlets owned by out of state interests, who had little reason to be concerned about the effects their markets had on the immediate vicinity.

Similar to bills that open the door for ownership by faceless national chains, gas stations, and grocery stores, local residency ensures ownership of the impact a retailer has on the local community. We know that retailers who adhere more closely to regulations such as minimizing advertising, especially to youth, training staff not to serve youth, and limiting or refraining from providing cheap alcohol, such as with happy hours and promotions, significantly reduce alcohol-related harms. Retailers with a stake in the community are more likely to abide by these practices in order to help create a safer environment not only for their patrons, but for their own family and friends.

Public health has a seat at the table when discussing alcohol regulations because it is for public health reasons that Prohibition was set in motion and a public health approach that was set in place afterwards to increase the possibility that some of the more egregious business tactics would be tempered by policies to reduce inevitable harm.

Thank you for considering these issues when reviewing SB 962.

*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 150-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*