



March 7, 2023

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 532 - Criminal Law – Overdosing in Public – Prohibition

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

My name is Al Jones and I am the Director of Operations for Roy Rogers Restaurants, a Maryland based hospitality company founded in 1980. We have 24 company restaurants, nineteen of which are located here in Maryland. Two of the Maryland locations, have significant crime and drug related issues in and around the restaurant.

One of the two is in my hometown of Hagerstown, MD across the street for the city police station. This area has always had an element of crime, but we were just outside the higher crime areas and the business, which opened in 1987, has been very successful. However, in the past five years, crime and drug related activity has increased significantly, resulting in reduction of evening sales and many incidents requiring the police. Out of all our restaurants, this location alone accounts for over 90% of all police calls company wide.

For security and safety reasons, two years ago, I spent \$1,500 installing locks on each of the restrooms of these two restaurants. Last year, despite the locks, the men's room at the Hagerstown location was the scene of two separate drug overdose incidents. Imagine escorting your young son or daughter to a locked restroom to find an unconscious drug user laying on the floor, with drugs and paraphernalia strewn on the floor.

In those two years, the Hagerstown City Police have been called to the restaurant multiple times for drug related incidents where the individual, clearly under the influence of drugs, was causing disruption in the dining room or actively using an illegal drug in my public restroom. We have even experienced one death in our restroom. Only one time has an individual been arrested for possession of drugs. Other times, these individuals were simply scolded, released and "advised to seek help". Of course, that never happens and so the illegal behavior continues in our community. Often, these individuals return the next day and created even more issues in the restaurant out of vengeance or retaliation. It is a dangerous and viscous circle, all because they were released. When I have complained to the police as to why these people are not arrested, I was told "because of the current laws, our hands are tied, there is nothing we can do, we have to release them". These dangerous incidents put the safety and well-being of my employees and guests at risk. It is only a matter of time until a guest or an employee is seriously hurt or worse.

The passage of Senate Bill 532 will give law enforcement officers the ability to take these individuals into custody so that they can get the proper services to recover from this life of drug abuse. Without this critical law enforcement tool, communities statewide will continue to be plagued with increasing crime and drug related issues.

Therefore, I respectfully request a favorable vote of Senate Bill 532.

Thank you,

Al Jones  
Director of Operations  
Roy Rogers Restaurants