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MEASURE: HB 2008
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To: Members of the Business and Labor Committee

Multnomah County supports HB 2008 because it provides valuable tools for the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) to more effectively respond to problem bars and taverns. This bill would allow local law enforcement to suspend a liquor license temporarily because of an immediate threat to public safety; it gives the OLCC greater clarity on when it can deny, revoke or suspend licenses; and it would require at least one member of the commission to have public safety or law enforcement expertise.

The consequences of high risk drinking cost an estimated \$558 million annually in Multnomah County alone. Preventing and reducing the harm caused by high risk drinking requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, treatment, and health and social services. However, prevention efforts are most effective when we also address the community conditions that contribute to the problems. By establishing clear and consistent standards for alcohol service we can improve safety for business patrons, employees, and neighborhood residents.

In 2011, Multnomah County received a grant to reduce high risk drinking among young adults. Out of this effort, a task force consisting of residents, business owners, health professionals, social service providers, higher education institutions, law enforcement and traffic safety representatives was formed. High risk drinking is a serious problem in Oregon, driving up healthcare costs and tragically resulting in needless violence, injury and death. These task force members identified the need to establish better standards and norms around alcohol sales as a top priority, and support this bill for the following reasons:

It ensures a voice for public safety on the OLCC:

The OLCC makes important decisions related to alcohol service that profoundly impact public safety. Currently, there is a spot on the Commission reserved for the liquor industry but not for a public safety professional. Adding this important perspective will bring needed balance to the Commission and ensure that public safety concerns and expertise are included in important discussions about alcohol policies in Oregon.

It clarifies when the OLCC can deny, revoke, or suspend a license:

This bill would provide the OLCC with authority to intervene earlier, specify violations and enforce appropriate penalties in order to address public safety and neighborhood livability issues caused by problem bars. While the vast majority of licensed liquor establishments are responsible businesses that contribute to their communities, there are some instances where they pose serious risks to public safety due to poor management and risky practices. Under current law, liquor license violations and their penalties are not clearly defined, nor is there a clear process for canceling or suspending annual liquor licenses. When establishments are able to continue serving alcohol with little or no consequences for problematic practices it diminishes feelings of safety for community members, establishes an unhealthy norm for young people growing up in the neighborhood and encourages poor business standards that impact all businesses in the neighborhood.

Protecting safety with immediate cessation of sales in extreme circumstances:

HB 2008 would also allow for an immediate emergency closure for up to 72 hours following a serious crime tied to the sale and service of alcohol. This would ensure the neighborhood can be secured, and that there is adequate time to properly investigate the crime and prevent possible retaliation crimes. Shootings and other violence at nightclubs and bars can be associated with gang activity which often flares up in clusters. This is an essential tool for police to ensure that venue employees and patrons, and neighborhood residents are safe.

In summary, Multnomah County supports this bill because:

- It ensures a public safety perspective will be included alongside a hospitality perspective in the OLCC policy making process.
- It establishes clear and consistent standards, allowing OLCC to more effectively address problems with bars and improve neighborhood safety and livability.
- It allows the police to temporarily close a venue after a serious crime to ensure the safety of venue employees and customers and neighborhood residents.

Sincerely,



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