

March 8, 2013

To: Members of the Business and Labor Committee

Good morning, Chair Doherty and Committee members for taking time to hear my thoughts about HB 2702 and why it is critical that this bill be given serious and thoughtful consideration. My name is Helen Ying. I have been an educator for 30 years, a Board member of Old Town/Chinatown Community Association, a member of a task force reducing high risk drinking in Multnomah County, a Board member of We Can Do Better, and a member of Kaiser's Patient Advisory Council.

I am asking for your support in bringing HB 2702 regarding Alcohol Impact Areas to be a law in Oregon. Having been an educator in secondary schools for 30 years, I am well aware of the impact of alcohol use and addiction for youth and their families. In fact, I see alcohol and substance addiction as being the number one culprit for under performance in schools and high incarceration rate in prisons. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including prevention, early intervention and treatment services. Research shows that the environment that people live in also influences alcohol use patterns and health outcomes. To be effective in preventing alcohol abuse and its consequences, we must create neighborhoods and communities that promote health and safety, where young people can thrive. It is time that we address the root causes of this problem by looking at the communities and neighborhoods our young people live in. Allowing Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) authority to create and implement "alcohol impact areas" (AIAs) that limit the sale of certain alcoholic beverages in defined geographical areas upon petitioning from a local government would be a step in the right direction.

AIAs have proven effective in mitigating alcohol-related problems where they have been adopted. For example, Tacoma, WA saw a 35 percent decrease in Emergency Medical Service incidents and a 61 percent decrease in "Liquor in the Park" police service calls in the year following implementation of their AIAs. Seattle saw a 9 percent decrease in Sobering Unit Van pick-ups and a 15 percent decrease in adult liquor violations in the two years following the implementation of their AIAs.

Please consider the following reasons for supporting this bill

**1) It supports local control:**

HB 2702 equips local governments with a powerful tool to address local conditions that contribute to problem drinking. The OLCC requires that local governments petitioning for an AIA approach businesses to voluntarily address issues, take public comment, document chronic public safety problems, and explain how an AIA would alleviate the documented problems. This process ensures that the community including businesses and residents are engaged in identifying problems and finding solutions.

## **2) It supports safe and healthy environments**

Highly visible sales of cheap, high alcohol content beverages and the street drinking and public intoxication associated with these products contribute to unhealthy norms and diminish residents' feelings of safety. Research indicates a positive correlation between availability of alcohol and negative community consequences including higher rates of crime, violence, and disease. AIAs can be used to establish positive, healthy norms and prevent over-saturation of alcohol sales, particularly cheap, high alcohol content beverages associated with harm.

## **3) It reduces access to products that are harmful to communities**

Inexpensive, high alcohol content beverages are most popular with young adults and street drinkers. Risky drinking among young adults contributes to increased sexual and other violence, difficulties in work and school, and to the three leading causes of death for young people: accidental injuries, suicide, and homicide. Street drinking is associated with increased disorderly behavior, property damage, and a depleted sense of public safety. Increasing price and reducing availability are effective strategies for reducing consumption among young adults and reducing consequences associated with street drinking.

### **In summary, I support this bill because:**

- It provides local jurisdictions a powerful tool to address local public safety issues;
- It provides the opportunity to reduce access to alcohol products known to be harmful to the community;
- It allows cities to create positive norms that support health for all including, youth and vulnerable populations

I recently joined of a task force in Multnomah County that is working to reduce high risk drinking for youths aged 18 to 25. I am volunteering for this task force as well as other community service like it because I believe drinking responsibly and getting a handle on alcohol use will make a difference in the quality of life for our community members. I know you share the same values and I beseech you to support HB 2702.

Sincerely,  
Helen