

Senate Law and Justice Committee

Public Hearing to Consider the Governor's Liquor Privatization Plan

Hearing Room #1 North Office Building Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Tuesday, April 30, 2013.

Testimony of Dakota Danay - Council Rock Coalition for Healthy Youth



Hello. My name is Dakota Danay, and I am a Junior at Council Rock High School South in Bucks Country. I would also like to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to address you on the impact of privatization. I would also like to thank you for your service to the wonderful people of Pennsylvania. While the main concern among many of you today will typically revolve around the effects that privatization will have on Pennsylvania's economy, I am here to emphasize the social effects of privatization to the youth. Privatization has the potential of being a major hazard to the youth population of Pennsylvania.

According to National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol activates the reward system, thus tricking the brain into thinking that something important and worth repeating just happened. Each time the behavior is repeated and reinforced, the odds go up that alcohol will be consumed again.

The biological changes occurring in the adolescent brain make teens particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol, and especially to heavy drinking. They also seem to influence how teenagers respond to drinking, which can be different from alcohol's effect on adults. Adolescents are more sensitive to alcohol's effects on social facilitation,

but less sensitive to its sedative affects, hangovers, and the loss of coordination. This combination puts adolescents at greater risk than adults because they are more stimulated by alcohol and can drink for longer periods.

Adolescence is a vulnerable time, and the early initiation and escalation of drinking can lead to increased risk for alcohol addiction and memory problems later in life.

According to Dr. David Jernigan, young people who begin drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol problems later in life than those who wait until they are 21.

Research shows heavy drinking can reduce the size of the hippocampus. It also damages the brain white matter, the tissue through which messages are transmitted throughout the brain. Unlike adults, teens are still forming connections between nerve cells that play a role in memory, and alcohol can disrupt the normal development of these connections. The frontal lobes are still under construction and already have difficulty controlling impulses, attention, and decision-making. Alcohol makes these problems worse. (NIH, SAMHSA, EUDL, NIAAA, CAMY)

As everyone here knows, kids, especially in their teens, make many brash decisions along their path to adulthood. These decisions, albeit commonplace for teenagers, are usually not of an extremely severe nature. However, with privatization comes a new, more dangerous element in the form of alcohol: cheap, easily-accessible, and very appealing alcohol. Why add a further and more dangerous element to an already large array of deadly substances that can easily be obtained by teenagers? To the employees that work in stores that would be affected by privatization, the opportunity to sell alcohol

to underage buyers under-the-table would be magnified; and businesses would take advantage of those opportunities to make more money because law-enforcement officials are not numerous enough to enforce each and every privatized sale. The privatization of alcohol must be prevented in order to protect the future of this state; the only true matter at hand is whether YOU all, as the voice of the people of this great commonwealth, are ready to take responsibility for the consequences of your decision here today. Do not think simply of the short-term benefits of privatization, but of its potentially deadly long-term consequences of your decision. Thank you again, and have a nice day.