



TESTIMONY OF
Colleen Church, Public Policy Liaison
ON BEHALF OF
The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility

Senate Law and Justice Committee
Pennsylvania Senate
October 29, 2019

Good afternoon Chairman Stefano and other distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Colleen Church. I'm testifying today on behalf of the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org) to share information with you on the issues of impaired driving and underage drinking.

Responsibility.org is a national not-for-profit organization that leads the fight to eliminate impaired driving and underage drinking and is funded by the nation's distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory; Brown-Forman; Constellation Brands, Inc.; DIAGEO; Edrington; Mast-Jägermeister US, Moët Hennessey USA, and Pernod Ricard USA. For more than 25 years, Responsibility.org has worked to guide a lifetime of conversations around alcohol responsibility and offer proven strategies to stop impaired driving. To learn more, please visit www.responsibility.org.

Impaired driving and underage drinking are complex issues that every community across the nation deals with. Responsibility.org is dedicated to program implementation, policy efforts, and research that address these problems. In these efforts we work closely with partners at the local, state, and national level and have enjoyed collaborating with professionals and leaders in Pennsylvania for many years.

It's important to note that significant progress has been made on both issues over the years. Since 1982, drunk driving deaths have been cut in half. Just last week, the U.S. Department of Transportation released new data showing that [drunk driving deaths](#) are at the lowest percentage of total traffic fatalities in history. In a thriving economy, drunk driving deaths have declined for three years in a row. Historically traffic deaths increase when economies thrive. We still have much work but it's important to understand that the nation is making notable progress

Underage drinking has also reached [historic lows](#). Lifetime alcohol consumption among our nation's youth has decreased 48% as reflected by trend data in the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. The number of persons under 21 who were killed in drunk driving crashes has decreased 80% since 1982.

In 2018, MTF data revealed consumption rates among 8th, 10th and 12th graders are at record low levels, and reported drinking among 12th graders in 2018 reached the lowest levels in survey history.

Additionally, [underage binge drinking](#) is at record low levels. Since 1991 prevalence of binge drinking has been reduced by more than 50 percent among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders. Heavy drinking (defined as five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past two weeks) among college students continues to show a decline, decreasing 36 percent proportionally (44% to 28%) since 1980.

In [Pennsylvania](#), alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities have declined 37 percent in the last 10 years. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health the annual average percentage of alcohol use among 12-17-year olds in Pennsylvania was 10.8 percent

Despite this important progress, continued work on underage drinking prevention is critical to ensure continued success in saving lives and a strong foundation for healthy adolescent development. Underage drinking is still viewed by many adolescents and their parents and other trusted adults as a rite of passage. Responsibility.org remains committed to eliminating underage drinking and its cultural acceptance.

My Personal Story

Prior to my work at Responsibility.org, I served three terms as the National President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Like many other people, my work on this issue began when a loved one's life ended. It was July 10, 2004 when my son Dustin was killed by an impaired driver. It's hard to believe it has now been 15 years. He has been gone almost longer than he lived on this earth.

Dustin was only 18 years old, had just graduated from high school and had his whole life ahead of him. That fateful night, Dustin was not drinking. He was doing what most kids like to do and was hanging out with friends when they decided to go grab a pizza. My husband Skip and I had talked to both of our sons about not drinking until age 21 and never drinking and driving. I am so proud that he didn't make any of those mistakes.

We also talked to our sons about the dangers of riding in a car with an impaired driver. But that night, Dustin needed a ride and he made a fatal mistake. He got into a car driven by a 19-year old female who had been consuming alcohol, marijuana and PCP. She was a polysubstance-impaired driver. She lost control of her car, careened off the road, flipped and landed in a river.

The driver and a front seat passenger escaped. But Dustin did not. In the back seat and unable to escape, he drowned. He had made so many good choices that night: He was wearing his seatbelt. Tests showed that Dustin was completely sober. We will never know why he got into that car.

Early the next morning, Skip and I got that knock on the door that no parent should ever receive. The pain of losing someone so senselessly to a 100 percent preventable crime never goes away. If I can prevent even one person from experiencing that needless heartbreak through my advocacy work, then it helps me honor Dustin's life.

Impaired Driving Prevention

Despite our nation's significant progress in preventing drunk driving, the impaired driving problem is evolving into a more complex issue of polysubstance impaired driving which involves consuming a combination of drugs or alcohol and a drug/drugs. is an issue that is of critical concern and is unfortunately becoming more common.

Polysubstance impaired driving is a critical issue for the traffic safety community to confront because drivers pose an extremely high crash risk. It's a growing problem with tragic consequences; however, there are practical solutions and countermeasures that we can push for.

Develop and Implement Alcohol Detection Technology

Work is underway to create a car that will not start if the driver's BAC level is above the legal limit. The project is called the [Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety](#). This 13-year public-private partnership between the Federal government and automakers has the potential to prevent 6,000 or more deaths per year which would make it the most effective DUI countermeasure in history. [Several states](#) have invested in testing the technology and once it is available, it has the It should be ready by 2024 and one day may also detect marijuana and opioid impairment as well.

Pennsylvania is one of the national leaders in the effort to develop autonomous vehicles with its robust efforts at Carnegie Mellon. Even when these self-driving cars are available, alcohol detection technologies will still be relevant. It will take 50 years or more before all cars are autonomous. Until then, alcohol detection technologies will be needed.

Deal with High-Risk Impaired Drivers More Effectively

Repeat DUI offenders, people who drive at high BAC levels at .15 or above and/or people who drive impaired by more than one substance pose a higher crash risk and are involved in more fatal crashes. These drivers often have underlying substance use and mental health disorders that contribute to their DUI behavior. In order to deter these offenders, specific actions must be taken.

Identify DUI offenders with underlying issues who are likely to repeat their DUIs

[All DUI offenders should be screened](#) for underlying issues and if the screening advises a more in-depth assessment, that should be completed as well. This is one of the most important things we can do to prevent impaired driving. Recent research has revealed that most impaired drivers have substance use disorders, and many have undiagnosed and untreated mental health disorders. It also maximizes scarce resources and leads to better results.

However, screening and assessment is often not done. When it is done, traditional tools that are not designed for DUI offenders are usually used. This is a critical misstep. Screenings and assessments must be conducted using a tool that is validated for DUI offenders or they will likely be misclassified as low risk offenders when in fact, most of the time, they are at a very high risk of re-offending.

DUI offenders tend to be in denial about their substance use disorders, they tend to be more functional than other criminals (i.e. have jobs, families), and they tend to be social. These factors are why [repeat DUI offenders continue to cause one-third of impaired driving deaths each year](#).

A good screening and assessment should ensure that any substance use disorders, and mental health issues are identified and addressed as part of an offender's sentence to prevent repeat DUI offenses. Currently there are only three tools validated for use with DUI offenders and two of them are free and available online.

One of the tools was funded by Responsibility.org and developed at Harvard Medical School. The [Computerized Assessment and Referral System - or CARS](#) - screens and assesses for substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health disorders. Cars also identifies recidivism risk and generates a report about a client's treatment needs while providing appropriate referrals to obtain treatment. One of the places it was [piloted](#) was in Judge [Michael Barrasse's](#) DWI court in Scranton, Pennsylvania where it was very useful in identifying offenders who needed a more intensive level of supervision and treatment in order to stop their DUI behavior. The CARS tool can be downloaded at www.carstrainingcenter.org.

Effectively monitor DUI offenders

It's very common for DUI offenders to be noncompliant with their sentences. Unless DUI offenders have been in the criminal justice system multiple times, they are usually sentenced to inactive supervision. That

means no one is checking to see if they install their ignition interlocks, refrain from driving with suspended licenses, attend victim impact panels, etc. Once they learn no one is watching them, recidivism is likely.

That's why screening and assessment is key because it informs criminal justice practitioners regarding which DUI offenders are unlikely to reoffend and allows an enhanced focus on the offenders at high risk of repeating the crime of DUI. This is a way of maximizing scarce resources for a more robust return on investment and a greater chance of preventing death and injury.

The Honorable [John Kennedy](#) from York, Pennsylvania was one of the first judges in the nation to implement a pre-trial supervision program called Target 25 that screens and assess DUI offenders and then ensures the public is protected by having offenders use ignition interlocks, participate in 24/7 sobriety programs and follow up with the court so they can be rehabilitated. This program has been very effective and is a model for other states to consider. Judge Kennedy is a member of our [Judicial Education Advisory Board](#).

[DWI courts](#) are also extremely effective in changing DUI offender's behavior and one of the most effective DWI court judges in the nation is [The Honorable Michael Barrasse](#) from Scranton, Pennsylvania who is also a member of Responsibility.org's Judicial Education Advisory Board. These DWI courts provide a team approach to changing behavior while protecting the public and keeping offenders a productive member of society. The model not only works, it saves money for communities.

Judges Barrasse and Kennedy [educated Congressional staff](#) on their strategies for monitoring DUI offenders this spring on Capitol Hill and are currently serving on our expert advisory panel as we develop a new program to address high-risk impaired driving.

High Visibility Enforcement, Public Education and Training

Responsibility.org has been honored to collaborate with the Pennsylvania DUI Association to support [high visibility enforcement](#) coupled with public education to deter people from driving drunk. There are many other cutting-edge efforts such as [electronic warrant programs](#) that can leverage technology to save lives. These programs are free and available online at www.responsibility.org.

Ignition Interlocks for all DUI Offenders

Responsibility.org also supports [ignition interlock devices for convicted DUI offenders](#). Research has shown interlocks to be incredibly effective in preventing DUI, especially when used in tandem with screening and assessment (and if indicated, treatment). These devices must be more widely used. In Pennsylvania only 30% of offenders who are eligible to install ignition interlocks do. Nationally the installation rate is about 25%. If it were 100%, we could save many more lives.

Address Drug-Impaired Driving

Drug-impaired driving is an issue of significant concern and it requires some different tactics such as specialized training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges. It is also necessary to ensure that toxicology labs are adequately funded to process blood samples in a timely manner. Additionally, there is a great need for improved data and public education on this issue. Responsibility.org has worked with its partners and with NHTSA and the United States Congress to focus on this issue along with drunk driving as part of its mission to eliminate impaired driving. The Pennsylvania DUI Association has one of the most robust [training initiatives for law enforcement](#) in the country and through its work is positioning Pennsylvania to lead on the issue of drug-impaired driving and polysubstance-impaired driving. We have been proud to support some of their training efforts.

Responsibility.org has partnered with the Governors Highway Safety Association to issue [three reports](#) on this topic, created a [policymaker's checklist](#) and provided grants to states for 5 years to help provide specialized training to law enforcement to identify drug-impaired drivers.

Underage Drinking

Primary Sources of Alcohol: Family and Friends

According to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) nearly half of current underage drinkers ages 12 to 20, who consumed alcohol in the past month, report the last time they drank alcohol it was either in someone else's house (48%) or their own home (38%). Additionally, 73% of these underage drinkers said they were drinking with more than one other person the last time they drank.

According to the 2017 [Penn State Evidence-Based Prevention and Intervention Support Center](#):

- 42% of 12th graders reported their primary source of alcohol was someone else buying it for them
- 23% of respondents said their parents gave them alcohol.
- 18% of all participants indicated they obtained alcohol from friends' parents,
- 25% said they got alcohol from a friend or sibling over 21
- Among 8th and 10th graders, the number who took alcohol without permission increased.
 - 8th graders: 43% took alcohol without permission in 2017 (as compared to 25% in 2015)
 - 10th graders: 41% took alcohol without permission in 2017 (as compared to 31% in 2015).

Parents Have the Most Influence on Youth

Even though parents and other trusted adults are the most frequently cited sources of youth access to alcohol, they also yield the greatest influence on whether their teens will drink alcohol. The 2016 Roper Youth Report shows that 71% of teens identify parents as the leading influence on their decisions regarding alcohol. That's a 29% increase since 1991.

These research findings have demonstrated a tremendous need to educate parents and other trusted adults on when to talk to their children about alcohol, how often, what to say, how to be a good role model, and how to set family rules around underage drinking. Nationally, collective efforts to reduce underage drinking were broadened more than a decade ago to focus on all points of youth access, but especially on social sources of alcohol for underage drinkers.

We believe the data-driven effort to focus on social sources of alcohol has helped the nation reach record lows in underage drinking. We do not think it is a coincidence that underage drinking decreased 50% since 2003, while conversations about underage drinking between parents and children increased 73%.

Underage Drinking Prevention Programs and Research

Since Responsibility.org's inception, we have been dedicated to developing innovative strategies and providing research-based resources at no charge to assist parents, educators, counselors, and other practitioners in their conversations with youth on how to make responsible decisions regarding beverage alcohol and the dangers of underage drinking. By offering support and resources to all stakeholders but especially parents, educators, and policymakers, we address underage drinking on all fronts.

Our underage drinking educational resources are distributed to individuals, schools, state and local government agencies, community-based organizations, and other organizations nationwide. Included with my testimony today are examples of the many campaigns we have launched or are developing. Our programs are evaluated for effectiveness. We have an [education advisory board](#) composed of national

experts to guide our educational program development. We also have a [National Advisory Board](#) that guides our organizational policies and programs. Our aim is to facilitate frequent family conversations beginning at an early age so that when children are faced with peer pressure to drink alcohol, they know how to respond and feel confident in their decisions to say “yes” to a healthy lifestyle and “no” to underage drinking.

We are a leader in the use of technology applied to alcohol education. Our underage drinking programs use cutting-edge research and technology to best educate youth and parents about the dangers of underage drinking. Our [Ask, Listen, Learn](#) program for middle school age children, their parents and educators, has reached more than 134 million people across the nation in English and Spanish and includes classroom lesson plans and educational videos that demonstrate alcohol’s effect on the developing brain. Program content regarding the effects of alcohol on the developing brain has been reviewed by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and is consistent with currently available science.

We partner with Scholastic, Discovery Education and [Classroom Champions](#) (a mentor program that brings Olympians into the classroom on various topics) and state attorneys general (including [Pennsylvania Attorney General Shapiro](#)) to distribute **Ask, Listen Learn**. It is the most widely distributed program of its kind. The program was [evaluated](#) in 2017. Key findings included:

- 86% of students said the program gave them enough information to help them make good decisions in high school about drinking.
- The program increased conversations between kids and adults by 51%
- 74% of students believe they could effectively explain to a friend how drinking alcohol affects the brain.

[Students Against Destructive Decisions \(SADD\)](#) is one of the premiere organizations working to prevent underage drinking. Responsibility.org is proud to partner with SADD nationally and in Pennsylvania. SADD’s Pennsylvania organization is one of the strongest in the nation. This spring we teamed up for a tour of the [Smashed](#) Program which includes a theatrical performance followed by an interactive workshop, a detailed evaluation measuring the impact of the program and follow up educational activities in the schools. In the past decade, the Smashed program has been delivered in 20 countries across six continents and has reached more than 320,000 students in the United Kingdom alone. Together with SADD, we adapted the program for a United States audience and made it available to students in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia to evaluate the program’s effectiveness in the United States.

After the Smashed program was conducted, the proportion of students who felt equipped to make good choices about drinking alcohol increased seven percent from 81% before the program to 88% post implementation. The proportion of students who say they know a lot about the dangers of underage drinking increased 22% from 55% pre-program to 77% after the program.

Our efforts extend into college with [resources for parents](#) on how to stay in touch with their college students especially in the first six weeks on campus which can be a vulnerable time for harmful and underage college drinking and alcohol-related consequences because of student expectations and social pressures at the start of the academic year. We help explain to parents and students that most college students do not binge drink and even more do not engage in extreme levels of binge drinking. According to the 2018 Monitoring the Future Study, only 28% of college students self-report binge drinking (defined as five or more drinks in a row) at least once in the past two weeks, and even fewer engage in extreme levels of drinking. Resetting social norms is an important part of college binge drinking prevention.

Leveraging Technology as an Intervention for Young Adults

Responsibility.org sponsors innovative research to identify new and effective ways to address underage and binge drinking. Once such example is research done by [Dr. Brian Suffaletto](#) of the University of Pittsburgh. Mobile health intervention and emergency departments provide a unique opportunity to screen college-age individuals for drinking problems and to intervene to reduce dangerous consumption and alcohol-related problems. Responsibility.org provided a grant to the American College of Emergency Physician's Emergency Medicine Foundation to explore the use of mobile phone text messaging as an intervention tool to reduce risky drinking among college-age adults.

[The research](#) identified dangerous drinkers ages 18-24 who presented in the emergency departments with alcohol-related injuries and researchers used text messaging to assess their drinking and then deliver brief interventions. The research concluded that an interactive text-message intervention was more effective than self-monitoring or controls in reducing alcohol consumption and alcohol-related injury prevalence up to 6 months after intervention completion. These findings, if replicated, suggest a scalable approach to help achieve sustained reductions in binge drinking and accompanying injuries among young adults. Dr. Suffaletto's has now secured funding from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to further explore this intervention.

The United States Congress passed the Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (Stop Act) in 2006 and reauthorized it in 2016. This law maintains a focused multi-agency national effort and federal support for state underage drinking prevention activities. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration manages this effort and implements the "Talk, They Hear You" campaign to help parents and other trusted adults to communicate with youth on underage drinking issues. Responsibility.org has supported the Stop Act and the "Talk, They Hear You" Campaign.

The Surgeon General issued a Call to Action in 2007 to prevent and reduce underage drinking that outlined a comprehensive national effort. That same year, The Federal Trade Commission and the alcohol beverage industry worked collaboratively to launch the We Don't Serve Teens consumer education campaign. The [We Don't Serve Teens](#) campaign has been recognized by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the National Prevention Council, and representatives of more than 40 states. All program materials are available in both English and Spanish and are provided free of charge. This collaborative effort is promoted by state alcohol regulatory agencies; state and local law enforcement; alcohol industry members; high schools and colleges; and social services organizations.

Responsibility.org strongly supports [responsible retailing practices](#). States and communities across the nation have stepped up underage drinking enforcement through **Cops in Shops** and Mystery Shopper programs, compliance checks, regular and ongoing retailer training, and usage of age verification devices and point of sale public awareness campaigns. The popular [Cops in Shops](#) program was developed by Responsibility.org.

Pennsylvania's Responsible Alcohol Management Program (RAMP), facilitated by the PLCB, offers practical advice regarding responsible alcohol management practices for licensees operating restaurants, hotels, clubs, distributors, breweries and wineries, to name a few. The program teaches how to detect signs of visible intoxication, how to effectively cut off service to a customer who had too much to drink, identify and card underage individuals, detect altered, counterfeit and borrowed identification, avoid unnecessary liability and help reduce alcohol-related problems in the surrounding community. Act 39 of 2016 made RAMP Server/Seller Training mandatory and training completions have increased (20% for Owner/Manager Trainings and 56% for Server/Seller Trainings between 2016 and 2018).

[The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia \(CHOP\) Research Institute](#) is another national leader in underage drinking prevention and safe teen driving efforts. In fact, CHOP was the group that established National Teen Driving Safety Week (which is held during the 3rd week of October each year) and continues to

provide innovative programs and research to guide the United States in efforts to save teen lives. Responsibility.org has supported [National Teen Driving Safety Week](#) and developed safe teen driving programs such as [I Know Everything](#) and has partnered with SADD and Ford Driving Skills for Life to promote safe teen driving. We have also advocated for the passage of graduated licensing laws that are proven to increase teen driving safety.

Hundreds of laws and ordinances have been enacted such as the 21 minimum drinking age law, laws to prohibit people under 21 from driving after drinking any alcohol, social host laws, enhanced penalties for adults who knowingly furnish alcohol to underage youth, penalties for underage people who consume alcohol, penalties for using fake IDs and limited amnesty for underage youth who call for help when a person is experiencing a medical emergency due to alcohol overconsumption (also known as medical amnesty or Good Samaritan laws). [Responsibility.org strongly supports](#) these [legislative initiatives](#).

These decades of action have helped to change the culture on underage drinking. We still have a long way to go before underage drinking is eliminated, but parents now have a better understanding of their role and influence in the fight against underage drinking. Other members of the community understand why it is important to help kids say “no” to underage drinking. Scientific research on the adolescent brain has educated us all on the importance of preventing underage drinking.

There are many important reasons to view underage drinking prevention as essential and they include maximizing a child’s cognitive potential and ensuring healthy organ development during the period of adolescence which is a time of transition and experimentation for teens. Research has shown that by preventing alcohol consumption among people under 21, parents are not only teaching their children the importance of following laws but also minimizing the chances their children will develop alcohol problems later in life. Research also shows that screening and assessment of underage drinkers helps to identify individuals who are predisposed to developing substance use disorders later in life.

Our work to prevent underage drinking is far from over but decades of collaborative efforts on all fronts has successfully reduced youth access to alcohol and illegal consumption. Pennsylvania has been a leader on these issues and has many experts, model programs and resources to prevent impaired driving and underage drinking. We will continue to collaborate with the Commonwealth’s experts to ensure continued progress. I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Responsibility.org stands ready to assist you in eliminating impaired driving and underage drinking in Pennsylvania. Thank you.