

Testimony of J.T. Griffin
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Senate Committee on Law & Justice
In Regard to Governor's Plan on Alcohol Privatization
April 30, 2013

Good morning Chairman McIlhinney and Minority Chairman Ferlo. I appreciate your invitation to testify on behalf of my organization, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, before the Pennsylvania Senate Committee on Law & Justice on the issue of Governor Corbett's plan to privatize alcohol sales in the State of Pennsylvania.

I would first like to say that MADD's mission is to eliminate drunk driving, serve the victims of this violent crime, and to prevent underage drinking. MADD's public policy recommendations are made using science-based research and sound data.

During the February 2013 meeting of MADD's National Board of Directors, the board voted to adopt policy recommendations against the state privatization of alcohol sales. Our position on this particular issue is based heavily upon a compilation of research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Services Community Guide from 2012.

Our position is as follows:

*MADD supports the retention of government control of retail alcoholic beverage sales in jurisdictions considering transfer of such control to the private sector. An analysis of 17 peer-reviewed studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was reported in, **The Guide to Community Prevention Services** (April 2012). The CDC concluded that privatization of alcohol sales will result in a reduction in the enforcement of sales regulations including enforcement of the minimum legal drinking age.*

Therefore, policies or legislation transferring state alcohol control to private control are counter to MADD's mission of eliminating drunk driving and preventing underage drinking.

I would like to point out several findings associated with the review of this research. According to the CDC, state alcohol privatization may lead to:

- Excessive alcohol consumption;
- Increase in social harms including interpersonal violence and vandalism;
- Reduced enforcement of sales regulations including enforcement of the minimum legal drinking age;
- An increase in property damage; and
- Healthcare, law enforcement, and lost productivity costs were substantially higher than the gained tax revenue to the states from privatization.

MADD has carefully reviewed Governor Corbett's plan. MADD believes that the governor has made a good faith effort to address the concerns raised by the CDC's report. However, there are a number of unanswered questions.

CDC data clearly shows that "Privatizing commonly results in increases in the number of off-premises outlets and of days and hours of sale, all of which have been shown to increase in excessive alcohol consumption and related harms." However, this seems to be a central component to the governor's plan. Specifically, I have been told that the governor's plan would shutter 600 state run alcohol retail outlets and replace them with 1,200 private sales licenses. In addition, supermarkets and big box stores would be eligible for alcohol sales permits. This would have the effect, of doubling sales outlets immediately as stated in the CDC research

MADD is also concerned that while the governor's proposal allocates \$5 million for law enforcement, this may be an arbitrary amount. Moreover, would additional funding be available to properly enforce the social problems to be expected from privatized alcohol sales? In addition, will this funding go exclusively to the Pennsylvania State Police or would local law enforcement agencies also receive funding, as they will be tasked with responding to many of the problems associated with alcohol sales privatization?

Finally, MADD believes the current administration may have the best of intentions and have worked diligently to craft a proposal to address some of the issues stated in the CDC guide, however there is no guarantee that future administrations will not change these policies and create an alcohol sales environment which could be detrimental to public health.

In short, if Pennsylvania transitions to a private alcohol sales system, returning to a state sales system will be nearly impossible.

If Pennsylvania is serious about reducing the effects of alcohol abuse on public health, MADD urges members of this committee to consider introducing and calling for passage of alcohol ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers. Currently, Pennsylvania requires these devices for repeat offenders. You probably know that in 2011, 407 people died in Pennsylvania as a result of a drunk driver. This accounts for 32 percent of all highway fatalities.

Currently, 17 states require convicted drunk drivers to use an ignition interlock device and the results have been amazing. States like Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and Louisiana have cut DUI deaths by over 33 percent by using these laws as a centerpiece of DUI reform. Strong interlocks laws are critical to public safety as 50-75 percent of convicted drunk drivers will continue to drive while their license is suspended.

Passage of an all offender interlock law would also make Pennsylvania eligible for additional highway safety funding through a new incentive grant program created last year in the latest version of federal highway reauthorization legislation.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of MADD. We urge this committee not to privatize state alcohol sales and instead concentrate on requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted DUI offenders.

Thank you.