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SEVENTH GRADERS AND LOCAL BREWERS OPPOSE ALCOHOL ADVERTISING ON NH BILLBOARDS

*Two seventh graders testified against SB 329, related to alcohol advertising on billboards in New Hampshire. They were **joined in opposition** by The Beer Distributors of NH and the Granite State Brewers Association.*

CONCORD, NH - A national outdoor advertising firm, CBS Outdoor, is expected to financially benefit from the passage of SB 329, a bill that would allow alcohol advertising on New Hampshire billboards, however, seventh graders Hanna Martuscello and Kylan Mastro of Dover Youth to Youth have just as much at stake; they pass three billboards on the bus ride to school every day.

Hannah and Kylan testified against alcohol advertising on NH billboards Wednesday before House Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

“These billboards would be one more way we’re exposed to alcohol advertising,” Hannah said.

The seventh graders mentioned how they’re already “smashed in the face” with alcohol ads in magazines, TV, radio, Pandora, and social media. They brought a visual display of alcohol ads and poked fun at the “Enjoy responsibly” disclaimer lost to vivid imagery of people achieving social acceptance by drinking.

Merrimack High School students Adam Floyd, president of the MHS SADD chapter, and Nick Masella, president of the MHS senior class, also testified in opposition to SB 329 on behalf of their school and community.

“Because we are students at Merrimack High School, we have witnessed firsthand the effect of underage drinking on individuals,” Masella said.

Floyd and Masella raised concerns that alcohol advertisements on billboards in Merrimack will encourage underage alcohol use, present a risk to people in recovery, and deface the New Hampshire image.

According to the Partnership for a Drug Free New Hampshire’s “Check the Stats” Campaign, NH ranked 2nd in the nation for the past month alcohol use among 12-20 year olds.

“Research has established that greater exposure to alcohol advertising contributes to an increase in drinking among underage youth,” Linda Saunders Paquette, executive director of New Futures said afterwards. “Limiting youth exposure to alcohol advertising is an effective preventative measure.”

The sale of alcohol is New Hampshire’s fourth largest revenue source, but it comes with a high cost. A report by economist Brian Gottlob of PolEcon Research found that the cost associated for excessive alcohol consumption in NH is \$1.15 billion per year, outpacing the revenue it generates.

An estimated 113,000 residents in New Hampshire need access to substance use disorder treatment.

“You can't build a business on substances like these unless you get people to use them heavily,” Paquette said. “To do that, you have to start them young.”

The Beer Distributors of NH, the Granite State Brewers Association (representing 31 local brewers), and other NH-based groups also oppose SB 329. Scott Schaier, executive director of the Beer Distributors of NH, mentioned that the beer industry wants to be part of the solution.

“Our beer distributors here in NH are committed to being part of the solution to underage drinking and we take our responsibility to protect our community very seriously,” Schaier said.

“There is no broad based support for this bill from any NH based group associated with the beverage alcohol industry and this proposed repeal offers no tangible economic benefit to the state of New Hampshire. In fact, we see the repeal of this long standing law as a potential threat to our family friendly image and valuable tourist brand which must be protected for the long term economic success of local businesses and our NH economy.”

Peter Egleston, of Smuttynose Brewing and the Portsmouth Brewery, opposes SB 329.

“You may be surprised to hear this coming from the owner of a brewery, but I feel there are more important matters at stake than whether producers of alcoholic beverages are allowed to use our lovely state’s public highways to promote their wares,” Egleston said.

Nicole Carrier, co-founder of Throwback Brewery, also submitted testimony against SB 329.

“I would expect that the large, multi-national brewers / spirit makers (with the big budgets) would jump on this new form of advertising in our state, driving up the prices to the detriment of the smaller businesses,” Carrier said.

“We can't ignore the fact that it really doesn't make sense to have big billboards on the highways advertising whisky or rum or beer when our society still deals with issues like drunk driving.

About New Futures

New Futures is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that advocates, educates, and collaborates to reduce alcohol and other drug problems in New Hampshire.

IMAGES AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA USE



From left to right - Hanna Martuscello and Kylan Mastro