King County

Julia Patterson
METROPOLITAN KING COUNTY COUNCIL
District Five

September 14, 2006

Mr. Nathan Ford
Three-Tier Review Task Force
3000 Pacific Ave SE
P.O. Box 43080
Olympia WA 98504-3080

Dear Mr. Ford:

As the current chair of the King County Board of Health, I have followed the work of th Three Tier Review Task Force with great interest. The Board of Health has had histor and ongoing involvement in issues surrounding the abuse of alcoholic beverages by underage drinkers.

When the King County Board of Health passed the attached resolution -- No. 00-301, did so to lay out a comprehensive set of strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among youth in King County.

King County has had some success in reducing underage drinking by being vigilant in encouraging regulation of the industry, education of our youth and the strict enforcement of alcohol laws in our state.

Alcohol is a unique product and should be regulated differently than other products by the state and federal government. The state has primary authority to regulate alcohol and has a responsibility to fight youth access to alcohol and reduce underage drinking A state based system of alcohol regulation from production through consumption is critical to addressing the issue of access to alcohol for minors.

The enforcement of current state and local laws including but not limited to minimum age drinking laws, zero tolerance laws, laws that restrict the supply and availability of alcohol, administrative license revocations and laws that regulate the sales, marketing

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and distribution of alcohol is essential to the effort to effectively combat underage drinking.

The continued regulation of alcohol by the state with regard to the manufacture, importation, sales, distribution, transportation, storage, and retail practices is in the public interest and is central to fighting underage and abusive consumption.

The citizens of our state have been well served by the three-tier regulatory structure tha has provided an additional tool for the monitoring and regulation of alcohol sales and distribution. Please do not risk wider use of alcohol by our youth by opening up the liquor laws in our state.

I ask you to oppose any changes in current Washington State law that will liberalize policies for the sale and distribution of beer and wine that in any way could make alcohol more readily available to our youth.

Please keep the strong laws our state has adopted in place that regulate the manufacture, distribution and sale of beer and wine that are designed to discourage underage drinking.

Sincerely,

Julia Patterson

Julia Patterson

KING COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
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Carolyn Edmonds, *Board of Health Chair*

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David Irons
Kathy Lambert
Frank T. Manning
Bud Nicola
Margaret Pageler
Alonzo Plough

BOH Staff:

Maggie Moran

RESOLUTION NO. 00-301
RECOMMENDING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO REDUCE UNDERAGE ALCOHOL USE IN KING COUNTY

WHEREAS, every year in the United States, at least 6,000 young people die in an event linked to alcohol, according to a report by Join Together: A National Resource for Communities Fighting Substance Abuse; and

WHEREAS, problems associated with underage drinking in Washington State – including traffic crashes, violent crime, burns, drowning, and suicide - cost $1.18 billion (in 1998 dollars), according to a 1999 document by Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation; and

WHEREAS, Public Health - Seattle & King County found in its August 1998 report on The Health of King County that alcohol is a major risk factor in the three leading causes of death among adolescents: (1) motor vehicle crashes; (2) homicides; and (3) suicides; and

WHEREAS, alcohol is the number one illegal drug problem facing King County youth, according to the 1998 Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB); and

WHEREAS, more than 75 percent of King County 10th graders surveyed in the 1998 WSSAHB said it was easy to get beer, wine or hard liquor; and

WHEREAS, according to the same survey, 89% of King County 10th graders did not believe there would be legal consequences from drinking alcohol; and

WHEREAS, alcohol compliance checks showed higher violation rates, i.e., sales to minors, than those resulting from tobacco compliance checks, according to data from the Seattle Police Department and the Washington State Liquor Control Board; and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health recognizes community concerns to improve health and provide supportive environments for children and youth; and

WHEREAS, a crucial way to address the involvement of youth with alcohol is to ensure that our youth have activities that engage and involve them, and that demonstrate that we as a community value our youth and their place in our society; and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Underage Drinking (comprised of health professionals, state and local governmental representatives, community advocates, substance abuse prevention providers, and youth) that worked throughout 1999 to: (a) analyze issues related to underage drinking; (b) identify what interventions are effective in addressing underage drinking issues; (c) gather information about similar efforts conducted nationally; and (d) develop and prioritize recommendations for the King County Board of Health on actions it can take to decrease underage drinking; and

WHEREAS, at the November 19, 1999 meeting of the King County Board of Health, the Ad Hoc Committee on Underage Drinking presented proposed recommendations for a

comprehensive strategy to reduce underage drinking in King County;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE KING COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH:

1. Endorses the creation of an ongoing, broad-based King County Task Force to Reduce Underage Drinking by expanding the membership of the existing Ad Hoc Committee on Underage Drinking to include additional representatives from the alcohol industry, law enforcement, and other relevant organizations, and by applying for grants to add at least one FTE to the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention Division of Public Health - Seattle & King County to provide staff support for the Task Force and build partnership efforts with community and school-based alcohol prevention programs.

2. Recommends, contingent upon funding for staff support, that the Task Force pursue a culturally-competent, comprehensive strategy to reduce underage alcohol use in King County based upon current research and best practices, addressing as its top priorities measures that will:

    a. Ensure that King County alcohol licensees/ retailers are aware of minimum purchase age laws and are in compliance by: (1) increasing the number of alcohol compliance checks in King County; (2) supporting Washington State approved and alcohol industry sponsored initiatives (such as TIPS and BAR code); and (3) coordinating efforts; and

    b. Improve understanding among King County youth and the general public about relevant alcohol-related laws and consequences of underage alcohol use through focus on driver's education efforts by: (1) working with driver's education teachers; (2) collaborating with the State of Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) and Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) to develop a youth focused driver's manual; (3) ensuring that information regarding youth alcohol laws is available at DOL offices; and (4) ensuring that knowledge of alcohol laws is part of driving license requirements.

3. Recommends, contingent upon funding for staff support, that, as part of its comprehensive strategy, the Task Force also consider the following actions:

    a. Collaborate with the Washington State Liquor Control Board (WSLCB) and partners to increase enforcement efforts regarding youth who attempt to purchase alcohol by expanding party patrol efforts; and

    b. Educate youth, parents and the general public about alcohol minimum age purchase laws and consequences by seeking additional funding for alcohol prevention programs in the schools and community, and by informing King County residents about commercial/dram shop liability and social liability; and

    c. Advocate for additional warning signs to be posted throughout King County by seeking inclusion of "Attention Minors-Identification is Required" signs among mandated WSLCB signs, and by exploring new signage related to underage drinking; and

    d. Advocate for legislative changes to existing alcohol laws to expand those authorized to conduct alcohol compliance checks to include local public health departments, and to add a mandate that alcohol retailers watch educational videos related to alcohol laws and that retailers who receive an alcohol violation be mandated to take an expanded set of training requirements; and

e. Work with the WSLCB and other groups to inform citizens and parent groups how to report liquor violations and strengthen efforts to educate the public abou alcohol licensees who violate laws regarding sales to minors; and

f. Examine what is currently being funded through alcohol taxes/licenses such as alcohol excise taxes, alcohol licensing fees, and determine if redistribution is necessary to support additional alcohol enforcement and prevention efforts directed toward underage drinking; and

g. Help disseminate media literacy materials and expand media literacy training aimed at the general public's ability to evaluate pro-alcohol messages, and help increase alcohol counter-advertising and public education campaigns; and

h. Seek resolutions and official proclamations from the Board of Health, County and City to increase awareness of underage drinking issues and support public education campaigns such as: April - Alcohol Awareness Month, May/June-Safe Prom and Graduation Events, September - Homecoming and Safe College/University Campus Activities, October - Hands Off Halloween Campaign, and December - National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month; and

i. Request that a King County representative work with the WSLCB to ensure alcohol licensee compliance with advertising, marketing and packaging regulations; and

j. Work with relevant organizations to offer alternative activities for youth such as alcohol - and drug - free music programs, sporting events, festivals, and celebrations; and

k. Support efforts of parent coalitions to reduce alcohol use by their children; and

l. Support school-based policies, such as drug-free zones, and support efforts of school-based organizations such as the Washington State Substance Abuse College Task Force; and

m. Seek partnerships with King County schools and other organizations to expand media literacy efforts, using tools such as "Media Sharp"; and

n. Support efforts of the King County Traffic Safety Coalition, Kent Drinking Driver Task Force and Eastside DUI Task Force, and collaborate with the WTSC, WSLCB, and local law enforcement to: (1) ensure education and enforcement of existing zero tolerance laws; (2) conduct traffic safety emphasis patrols; (3) uphold impaired driving laws; and (4) ensure responsible beverage service techniques.

o. Support and emphasize programs and projects that engage and involve youth, and support activities that emphasize their value in our community.

COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH