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Long-Shot California Alcohol Tax Increase Bill - ABX2-18 - Gains Momentum & Support

“Cocktails for Healthy Outcomes Act” Would Raise \$200 Million Annually for Developmental Disability Services & Health Programs

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA (September 11, 2015) Alcohol Justice is reporting today that public health and safety advocates are expressing support and admiration for Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla (D-Concord) who has introduced ABX2-18 – “Cocktails for Healthy Outcomes Act.” The bill will place a dedicated 5-cents surtax on only “on-sale drinks containing distilled spirits.” It made it through the Public Health and Developmental Services Committee earlier in the week on a strong 9 to 4 vote. It is scheduled to be heard today, Friday, at the call of the Chair of the Second Extraordinary Session Finance Committee.

“We support ABX2-18 because California loses over 10,000 lives each year due to alcohol-related causes while the public suffers more than \$31.8 billion in annual costs from alcohol-related harm, of which the government burden is \$13.7 billion,” stated Bruce Lee Livingston, Executive Director / CEO of Alcohol Justice. *“We are hopeful that the new political will expressed in this bill to raise the cost of alcohol through new taxes will continue in the next legislative cycle. Alcohol Justice would like to see a tax increase extended to all alcohol beverages to help compensate society for the costs of alcohol misuse and to marginally reduce problem drinking.”*

As of this morning, the following organizations and individuals had registered support for the measure:

- Alcohol Justice
- The Arc of California
- Association of Regional Center Agencies
- California Medical Association
- California Respite Association
- California Society of Anesthesiologists
- California Supported Living Network
- Disability Rights California
- East Bay Developmental Disabilities Legislative Coalition
- Epilepsy California
- Futures Explored, Inc.
- John Gioia, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
- Los Angeles Drug & Alcohol Policy Alliance (LADAPA)
- Lutheran Office of Public Policy
- National Down Syndrome Society
- North Los Angeles County Regional Center
- On My Own Independent Living Services
- Regional Center of the East Bay
- Rehabilitation Services of Northern California
- Strategies to Empower People
- TASH
- United Cerebral Palsy California

“Predictably, Big Alcohol front groups like Wine Institute, The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, Beer Institute, and the California Restaurant Association are opposed to the bill,” stated Michael Scippa, Director of Public Affairs for Alcohol Justice. *“They would like to continue to profit at the expense of public health and safety. The last time the state raised any alcohol tax was in 1992, when it went up a penny. Hopefully, ABX2-18 is signaling the sea change is coming.”*

Raising the cost of tobacco products has been accepted as an effective and appropriate policy measure in helping to pay for Medicare and Medicaid bills for tobacco-related illnesses and to reduce tobacco use. This assumption is equally, if not more so, relevant to alcohol products. Although tobacco on its face kills more people annually, alcohol harms cost twice that of tobacco. Not only is California burdened with billions of dollars in alcohol-related harms, but also to add insult to injury, Big Alcohol does not pay *any* fees at the state level to mitigate or offset the exorbitant cost of its products, which is imposed on all Californians.

For more information on alcohol taxes and harm, and to use an alcohol tax calculator to, go to www.alcoholjustice.org.

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