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Mail to: paige.higerd_HC@house.texas.gov

Texas House of Representatives
Ways and Means Committee
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Chair Burrows, Vice Chair Guillen, and Committee Members:

As you look at the budgetary shortfalls this biennium, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth along with the other organizations that have signed this letter, ask that you consider raising alcohol excise taxes to address budgetary shortfalls. **Not only would this increase provide budgetary relief by generating \$1.4 billion in revenue over the biennium, but it would also aid in prevention efforts and save more than 400 lives every year.**

Alcohol excise taxes are a poorly performing revenue stream. The alcohol excise tax has not been raised since 1984. Currently, the excise tax on spirits in Texas is the 46th lowest in the nation. The wine excise tax is 44th in the nation and the beer excise tax is 31st. **Yet excessive alcohol use costs Texas \$19 billion per year – that's \$695 per Texan annually.**

Research shows increasing alcohol excise taxes as a "best buy" for reducing the burden and negative economic impact of harmful alcohol use. This recommendation is reflected in research by the Centers for Disease Control, The Surgeon General's "Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health", the National Institutes of Health, and the Institute of Medicine, among others.

By raising alcohol excise taxes, the equivalent of just ten cents per drink, the science shows improved health outcomes that will benefit all Texans. Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth commissioned the report "The Effects of Alcohol Excise Tax Increases on Public Health and Safety in Texas" written by expert scientists in the field. The report is attached for your convenience. **Based on the existing research literature, higher alcohol prices also lead to reductions in impaired driving crashes, cirrhosis, sexual assault, robbery, and violent behavior towards children, etc. Modeling shows that in Texas, a dime a drink increase would annually prevent 112 alcohol-related traffic crashes, 55 homicides, and 57 suicides.**

Data from a Baseline & Associates poll conducted in 2016 also show that Texans support this cost-effective measure, which would reduce and prevent underage drinking, alcohol dependence and abuse, suicides, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, among many other public health and safety concerns. Texans, including moderate drinkers, don't mind a dime a drink to save lives and generate much needed income for our economy.

Heavy drinkers will pay the vast majority of the excise tax increases, but they, their families, and communities will also benefit the most. A ten-cent increase in the tax on a drink will generate \$708 million in new tax revenues per year, despite reductions in alcohol consumption by heavy drinkers that would result. The evidence presented in the attached report demonstrates that an increase in alcohol excise taxes will be beneficial to the state of Texas by raising much needed funds and reducing excessive alcohol use. These conclusions are not unique: in their landmark 2004 report *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, the leading scientific advisory bodies to the U.S. Congress, called for an increase in alcohol excise taxes as a central part of a comprehensive plan to reduce underage drinking and related consequences.

Thank you for your consideration and time. If you have any questions, we are always available and willing to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Nicole Holt, CEO

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Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth is the state's leading organization working to end underage alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Founded in 1997, with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation administered by the American Medical Association, the statewide coalition builds on the strengths and successes of its longtime identity, Texans Standing Tall, while bringing new focus and energy to its mission of creating healthier and safer communities.

Texas Association of Specialty Courts
Texas Pediatric Society, The Texas Chapter of the AAP
Texas Coalition of Healthy Minds
Coalition of Behavioral Health Providers
The Honorable Judge Paul White, Lufkin
Association of Substance Abuse Programs (ASAP)
Board of Directors of The Coalition, Inc.
Drug Prevention Resources
San Antonio Council on Alcohol and Drug Awareness