

# Alcohol Regulation with a Public Health Lens:

**A resource for coalitions**

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MA Alcohol Policy Coalition  
Western MA Policy and Norms  
Workgroup

# Coalition Reflections

# Why does alcohol policy matter?

- Policy is an **evidence-based** way to create positive changes in your community.
- Most people know **at least one person in their life** that struggles with alcohol dependency.
- New research on the **negative health impacts** of alcohol consumption.
- Weak/unenforced alcohol regulations **cost the community**.





# Massachusetts Data: Public Health, Cost & Alcohol

- Alcohol's **role in death and disability** in MA has risen by 13.8% since 2009.
  - This is faster than lung cancer, diabetes, hypertension, dietary risks and tobacco use.
- As of 2022, Massachusetts ranks 19th highest among the states for **binge drinking**. Roughly 59% of MA adults (18+) drink, and 29% binge drink.
- In 2010 (the last year for which estimates are available), alcohol problems **cost the state \$5.6 billion** (\$861 per person, \$1.93 per drink), \$2.26 billion (\$345 per person, \$.77 per drink) of which was paid directly by government.

## **Regulatory Authority in MA (M.G.L Chpt. 138)**

**State Alcohol Beverage Control Commission (ABCC)**-license application and renewal, investigation and prosecution of license violations, supervises the wholesale, import and manufacturing sectors

**Local Authority** (Local Licensing Authority)-Responsible for oversight of retail activity

- Off Premise, On Premise, Temporary-Farmer Series, One-Day

**“Agent”** designated by the LAA, eg. Police, Health, for enforcement



# State & Local Alcohol Authorities

Work together for safe, healthy communities. Well-crafted regulations

- Protect businesses
- Protect Individuals
- Protect Communities

***“There must be a public need and serve the common good.”***

*-Town of Wakefield, Alcohol Licensing Regulations*

# How Strict is Massachusetts Alcohol Policy? M.G.L. Chapt 138

- There is a common misconception that MA has very strong alcohol regulations.
- In reality, there are **some strict alcohol regulations and some looser (or non-existent) alcohol regulations.**
  - Ex: Happy Hour Ban, Dram Shop Liability
  - Ex: Low excise tax on alcoholic beverages

# Alcohol Policy and Public Health

- Evidence-based ways to reduce alcohol-related problems:

- Limit physical availability and access
- Reduce/restrict alcohol advertising
- Increase alcohol price





# Alcohol Regulation: The 4 P's



**Product**



**Place**



**Price**



**Promotion**

**The four P's affect community  
access and availability**

So what can  
municipalities do?

# Examples of policies that municipalities can implement:

## Retail Availability and Access

- Disallow BYOB in restaurants
- ☐ Disallow vending machines
- ☐ Disallow home delivery
- ☐ Disallow drive-through windows
- ☐ Cap number of retail liquor licenses
- ☐ Require permanent locations
- ☐ Require electronic scanners
- ☐ Require a closed-circuit camera system
- Require Responsible Beverage Service Training

## Product

- ☐ Disallow the sale of nips/half-pints

## Social Access

- ☐ Strengthen Social Host Liability
- ☐ Require Keg registration
- ☐ Event Restrictions
- ☐ Noise/nuisance Ordinances

## Price

- ☐ Raise fines during prom season/holiday season
- ☐ Set fines/license suspension for failed compliance
- ☐ No business sale until outstanding penalties satisfied



# Informed Alcohol Prevention Strategy & Policy

Use local data to select the best policy strategy. (Source: APRC)

| Easy Retail Access                                                      | Easy Social Access                                                                                                              | Permissive Social Norms                                                                             | Low Perceived Risk                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>When youth purchase from a store</i>                                 | <i>When youth get alcohol from a party, parent, friend, sibling</i>                                                             | <i>Attitude, values, behaviors, expectations that convey acceptance of alcohol use</i>              | <i>Perception that there is little to no physical, legal or social consequences to use</i>                                  |
| Compliance Check<br>Mandatory RBS<br>Training<br>Alcohol Outlet Density | Shoulder Tap<br>Party Dispersal<br>Communication<br>Campaign<br>Social Host Ordinance<br>Keg Registration<br>Event Restrictions | Communication<br>campaign<br>Advertising restrictions<br>Event Restrictions<br>Prevention Education | Sobriety Checkpoints<br>Communication<br>Campaign<br>School Policy<br>Minor in Possession<br>Policy<br>Prevention Education |

# Sample Wakefield Alcohol Data to Inform Policy

## Youth Alcohol Use

- 38% ever used
- 18% of WHS youth used alcohol within the past 30 days
- 1 in 10 binge drink
- Over half WHS youth think alcohol is easy to access
- Where youth report accessing alcohol (TBD)

## Outlet Density : Number of Licenses Allowed by State \*

- **On-Premise: 1 license per 1,000 people. After the first 25,000, increased to 1 license per 10,000 people.**
- **Off-Premise: 1 license per 1,000 people.**

## Wakefield's Numbers

- 7 Off-Premise/Package Store Licenses (1-beer/wine, 6-All Alcohol)
- 24 On-Premise Licenses (3-Club/2-Hotel/In-Keeper)
- # of Temporary Licenses Approved in past year 3 years (TBD)

## Compliance Data/Liquor Law violations-TBD

## Public Safety or Resident Concerns-TBD

*\* If there are "all alcohol" licenses, the municipality can issue at least 5 additional on and 5 additional off- premise licenses for malt beverages or wine or both, regardless of population. TBD denotes data not available at time of presentation, but could be gathered as part of community process.*

# Wakefield Regulations at a Glance-Possible Areas for Discussion

Updates to reflect new state law regarding citizenship

Update Famers Series Section

Refusing Entry to Intoxicated Persons/Right to Evict

Notifying Police of Disturbances/Illegalities/Injuries

Modifications to Training Requirements (Delivery Drivers/Anyone who verifies ID)

Number of alcohol licenses-especially one-day licenses

Location of Licences

Restrictions near schools?

Limit proximity or number within the same neighborhood?

Stronger Sanctions for Serving/Selling to Minors

Restriction on Advertising

No sale of singles or nips



## Next Steps & Coalition Interest

Thank you!