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New State Task Force Proposal on Alcohol To-Go Announced at Committee Hearing

Public health experts will provide a valuable resource as policy is developed and implemented
Representative Charlie Geren, lead sponsor of alcohol to-go bill, offers support for task force

(Austin, TX – March 10, 2021) – Today, at the legislative committee hearing for HB 1024, which seeks to permanently allow the sale of alcoholic beverages for pick-up and delivery, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) announced a proposal for the creation of a state task force in response to the bill. This task force, which will include several public health experts, will be charged with examining the public health impact of the law, particularly to youth, and creating targeted measures for addressing any potential risks.

Specifically, the proposed task force will:

- **Guarantee public health experts are active participants** in policymaking and enforcement;
- **Require a formal review** – undertaken by public health experts – to assess public health impact of alcohol to-go, with data and findings made publicly available; and
- **Develop enforceable protections** that will limit underage access and its negative consequences.

“There are simply too many unanswered questions about alcohol to-go sales and the expanded access it provides to underage drinkers,” said **Nicole Holt, CEO of TxSDY**. “As the many aspects of HB 1024 are debated – its merit, its supporters, the money it will generate – there is no room for debate on this: Our children’s health and safety is non-negotiable. A task force to directly address the inevitable health consequences of this bill not only makes sense – in helping protect our kids, it becomes a moral imperative.

At the hearing, Representative Charlie Geren (TX-99), lead sponsor of HB1024, stated his support for the task force and that he would work to make the proposal a reality as discussions on the bill move forward.

The task force was proposed in response to the “alcohol to-go bill”, which would permanently allow the sale of alcoholic beverages as delivery or pick up, following temporary measures that were put in place

following COVID-19 shutdowns. As it is currently drafted, the bill creates problematic expanded access to underage drinkers without providing specific, enforceable mechanisms for limiting that access.

Data and studies have clearly demonstrated that expanded access to alcohol leads to its expanded use, which consequentially results in many associated negative consequences, including immediate and long-term health impacts , including alcohol dependence, and alcohol-impaired driving crashes.

In 2019, 3,615 people were killed in traffic crashes in Texas, with 37% (1,332) being caused by alcohol-related crashes This number far exceeds the nationwide percentage of 28%. According to Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in 2019, 27% of drivers in alcohol-related crashes were age 25 or under, and 7% of all DUI drivers in fatal crashes were under age 21.

Today's hearing was before the Texas House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures, chaired by Representative Senfronia Thompson (TX-141).

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