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New State Task Force on Alcohol To-Go Must be Created to Limit Underage Access

*Public health experts provide a valuable resource – and should a significant role
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 proposes permanently allowing the sale of alcoholic beverages for off-premise consumption, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) proposed the creation of a state task force. This task force, which would include several public health experts, would 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 would:

- **Guarantee public health experts are active participants** in the legislative process and policymaking;
- **Require a formal review** – undertaken by public health experts – to assess public health impact, with data and findings made publicly available; and
- **Develop enforceable protections** that will limit underage access and its 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 proposed task force, saying, “I’m committed to ensuring the health and safety of our youth. And I’m sure I speak for many of my colleagues who feel the same. A task force will serve as a valuable resource in helping us do just that. I thank Ms. Holt for her suggestion and look forward to working with her to make it happen.”

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 to-go orders, 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 consequences, including immediate and long-term health impacts and alcohol-impaired road incidents. Driving under the influence of alcohol is the cause of more than 1,000 Texas deaths per year. Additionally, Texas regularly ranks as the state with the highest number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in the country, and in 2017, one quarter of alcohol-related driver crashes statewide involved a driver under age 25.

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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