



HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH

SUPPORT THE PUBLIC HEALTH ALCOHOL BILL

Message from Senator Frances Black

This April and May, we are calling on services, groups & individuals to support the HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH Facebook campaign to show public support for the Public Health Alcohol Bill. The legislation has been the subject of ongoing and, more recently, very intense lobbying from the alcohol industry and from retailers of alcohol at the local level. There is a huge need for local people to demonstrate to elected representatives that there is public support for the Bill. We are calling on you to take a lead in your organization and encourage your members to participate in and support this Facebook campaign.

'HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH'

Take a selfie, post, like and share

SHOW THE POLITICIANS THAT WE CARE

SUPPORT THE PUBLIC HEALTH ALCOHOL BILL NOW!

FACEBOOK PAGE 'HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH'

The page will go live on Monday, April 24th.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH ALCOHOL BILL

The bill aims to reduce alcohol consumption in Ireland to 9.1 litres per person per annum by 2020 and to reduce the harms associated with alcohol. The Bill consists of 29 sections and includes five main provisions. These are: minimum unit pricing; health labelling of alcohol products; the regulation of advertising and sponsorship of alcohol products; structural separation of alcohol products in mixed trading outlets; and the regulation of the sale and supply of alcohol in certain circumstances.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill contains a package of measures designed to begin to tackle our harmful relationship with alcohol, including measures that address the key areas of alcohol pricing, marketing and availability.

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SOME HEADLINE CONCERNS IN RELATION TO ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND HARM IN IRELAND

- Alcohol harm in Ireland currently claims three lives a day and is also responsible for a huge burden of ill-health, putting a particular strain on our health services, where 1,500 beds are occupied by people with alcohol-related illnesses every night.
- Policy makers and government in Ireland have recognised for a long time that the availability of cheap alcohol has a direct relationship to the levels of harm in our communities
- Section 9 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act gave a legislative basis for structural separation of alcohol in mixed trading outlets. However, Section 9 was never commenced and the Minister reserved powers to commence this section of the Act at any point. The Public Health Alcohol Bill has again recognised the importance of structural separation but there is a real risk that government may amend the elements of the Bill relating to this issue.
- Between 1998 and 2013, the number of licenses to sell alcohol in the off-trade sector rose by 377% (from 1072 to 5116).
- According to the Health Research Board, at least three quarters of alcohol consumed in Ireland is as part of a binge.
- Alcohol consumption in Ireland according to 2016 figures is 11.46 litres of pure alcohol per person aged 15+, an increase of 4.8% from 2015 (10.93 litres). When consideration is given to the 20% of the population aged 15 and over who do not drink alcohol, our alcohol consumption rises to 14.33 litres.
- The rate of alcohol related liver disease has trebled in Ireland between 1995 and 2013.

INDUSTRY LOBBYING AND THE CONFLICT WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health Alcohol Bill has been the subject of intense lobbying from retailers and alcohol industry players over the past year with various lobby groups and PR firms presenting their case to members of the Oireachtas in a bid to have strong public health measures outlined in the Bill watered down and / or removed.

Leading public health expert, Thomas Babor, in a 2012 review of the alcohol industry's efforts to influence public policy initiatives concluded that the industry has, in recent years, intensified its scientific and policy-related activities under the general framework of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, most of which can be described as instrumental to the industry's economic interests. In recent years, there is evidence of

efforts to influence policy more directly and industry actors have been implicated in drafting the text of policy documents in four countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Although the alcohol industry claims to discourage binge drinking, the reality is that alcohol companies would lose significant profits should underage and binge drinking in Ireland be reduced. No publicly-traded company can intentionally lose profits. The alcohol industry therefore, has a clear conflict of interest with safe and responsible drinking.

Statement from Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organisation

‘Based on their lack of support for effective alcohol policies, misinterpretation of the Global Strategy’s provisions and their lobbying against effective policy measures, we believe that the alcohol industry’s inappropriate commitments must be met with a united response from global health community’

World Health Organisation’s 2001 Stockholm Declaration on Young People and Alcohol ‘Public health policies concerning alcohol need to be formulated by public health interests, without interference from commercial interests.’

TIME TO HAVE YOUR SAY

There is a window of opportunity for groups and organisations concerned about the health and well-being of the nation to have our voices heard. We are seeking support, endorsement and promotion of a short social media campaign to highlight public support for the Bill over the coming weeks when the Bill is expected to return to the Seanad.

FACEBOOK PAGE

Name of Page: Hands Off Our Health

Key message / campaign statement: Take a photograph with the sign reading ‘Hands Off Our Health’ and make a statement beginning with the words ‘I’m supporting the Public Health Alcohol Bill because’