

LB 295
General Affairs Committee
Testimony of Chris Wagner
Project Extra Mile
11620 M Circle, Omaha, NE 68137
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Good afternoon, Chairman Briese and members of the committee. My name is Chris Wagner, and I am the Executive Director of Project Extra Mile, a network of community partnerships across the state working to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and its tragic consequences. We are here in opposition to LB 295.

The current state law prohibiting the sale of alcohol to individuals in a motor vehicle was put in place to save lives by deterring impaired driving. Many states have considered this a common-sense measure to reduce impaired driving injuries and fatalities. Research conducted on drunk driving in New Mexico has shown that the odds of drinking in the vehicle prior to arrest were significantly higher for drive-up window users than for offenders who purchased alcohol elsewhere.

Nebraska already ranks as the second-worst self-reported drunk driving state with 955 DUI episodes per 1,000 population and has been called out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for having almost double the national rate. This behavior also puts innocent Nebraskans at risk.

The Nebraska Highway Safety Office reported 707 deaths due to alcohol-related crashes between 2010 and 2019. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, almost 40 percent of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities are victims other than the drinking driver. In 2016, 214 children aged 14 years or younger died in these crashes nationwide.

LB 295 is not going to move us in the right direction. In all likelihood, it will exacerbate an already serious problem in our state. Therefore, we would urge the committee to indefinitely postpone LB 295 to keep our roadways safe after the pandemic has been brought under control and the executive order temporarily authorizing sales in vehicles is rescinded. Thank you for your consideration.