

LB 836
General Affairs Committee
Testimony of Chris Wagner
Project Extra Mile
January 22, 2024

Good afternoon, Vice Chair Hughes and members of the committee. My name is Chris Wagner, and I am here representing Project Extra Mile, a network of community partnerships working in Nebraska to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms. We are here in support of LB 836, and we want to thank Chairman Lowe for bringing this important bill.

Our state has experienced too many tragedies involving young people who lose their lives early due to alcohol. An estimated 22 underage Nebraskan youth lose their lives every year due to alcohol-related causes resulting in over 1,000 years of potential life lost (CDC ARDI, 2022). LB 836 takes a first step towards a commonsense measure that could help prevent these tragic deaths by separating or distinguishing alcoholic beverages from non-alcoholic beverages in retail locations across our state that are branded in a similar manner.

Research has found that brands utilizing more youth-appealing content were more likely to be consumed by youth (Padon et al., 2018). Other studies have also shown underage exposure to alcohol increases earlier alcohol use initiation and engagement in binge and hazardous drinking among youth (Jernigan et al., 2016).

As you can see from the handouts provided, these products are extremely similar in appearance and can easily be mistaken by youth for sodas and other legal products that are marketed to them. We would strongly urge the committee to advance this bill expeditiously and consider prioritizing it so that it has the greatest chance of reaching the Governor's desk during this short session.

Thank you for your consideration.