

**LB 1235 & LB 1236**  
**General Affairs Committee**  
**Testimony of Chris Wagner**  
**Project Extra Mile**  
**January 31, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairman Briese and members of the committee. My name is Chris Wagner, and I am here representing the Project Extra Mile coalition. We are here in opposition to LB 1235 and LB 1236 on the basis that they would contribute to the further dismantling of the three-tier regulatory system that protects both public health and the state's interests.

Alcohol is different; it is a drug. And so, it is regulated differently than most commodities in the market. If sold illegally or consumed excessively it is dangerous.

Senator Brewer, I know brought Whiteclay into the discussion earlier, and I would just point out that it is not just individuals making bad decisions. It is a system that is set up. It is when we deregulate. It is when we pass bad policies around alcohol that encourage excessive consumption that we have these problems, not only in Whiteclay, in every legislative district in our state.

The three-tier system has been around for a long time. It is not outdated. It really does work and there are some examples in the documents that I provided. It is also widely supported by the public. Actually, public support of the three-tier system has increased according to the Center for Alcohol Policy over the last couple years, even during the COVID-19 pandemic when states were moving to deregulate. It is supported by the public and they see the need. There are examples of how it works – keeps products that have been tainted, there is an example of Sam Adams bottles that had glass in the product that were able to be recalled quickly because of the three-tier system. There are also examples cited in other countries. The UK for example, when they started to deregulate over many years, they have had a lot of problems around that.

I am not here to argue that there isn't an issue in our state. I am just urging you to find a way within the existing system, without allowing the self-distribution, if at all possible. The gentleman from Empyrean Brewing had a pretty interesting point in his testimony that they have been back many times over the years to ask for more and the goal posts keep moving, and it is really incumbent upon this committee and this body to draw the line at some point.

It is a slippery slope, and we need to balance the realities on the ground in terms of public health and safety. We have over 700 alcohol-related deaths in any given year. Alcohol-attributable deaths increased by 66% most recently as reported by the Department of Health and Human Services, and over 2,400 alcohol-related hospitalizations. Just a lot of problems and I want you all to keep that in mind as you move forward on these bills that there is the other side to the coin.

Thank you for your time and consideration.