



March 22, 2011

The Honorable Isadore Hall III
Chairman Assembly G.O. Committee
State Capitol
1020 N St., Rm. 156
Sacramento, CA 95814

via fax: 916/319-3979

Re: AB 183 (Ma) Support – Prohibit Alcohol Sales Through Self-Serve Checkout Systems

Dear Chairman Hall:

On behalf of California's endangered youth, Marin Institute supports AB 183 to ban alcohol sales through self-serve checkout systems. As the nation's alcohol industry watchdog for the past 25 years, Marin Institute has led alcohol research, policy formulation, and advocacy to reduce alcohol-related harm.

Easy access to alcohol is a key component of underage drinking, the root cause of everything from youth violence and crime to car accidents and high-risk sex. Add self-serve checkout in grocery stores that sell beer, wine and liquor and you have a recipe for disaster.

In California, more than 2.3 million underage youth drink alcohol each year. In 2006, the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* concluded that underage drinking cost the residents of California a staggering \$7.3 billion annually.

Anecdotal and evidence-based data has confirmed that retailers or supermarkets with self-serve checkouts allow youth to easily purchase or steal alcoholic beverages. Passage of AB 183 is a significant opportunity for the legislature to address this avenue of youth accessibility.

We understand that advanced technology and innovation like self-serve checkouts have enabled many retailers to reduce their operational costs. Innovation, convenience, and increased profits however, must never take precedence over protecting public health and safety.

Society and the California legislature have acknowledged that dangerous substances like tobacco, drugs, spray paint and adhesives require greater controls at point-of-purchase to prevent easy access by youth. Passage of AB 183 would acknowledge that alcohol deserves the same type of controls to prevent increased alcohol-related harm to youth. These additional controls are also necessary to ensure that already intoxicated adults do not purchase alcohol.

For these reasons Marin Institute strongly urges the legislature to protect California's youth and the public health and safety of all California residents and visitors by passing AB 183.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lee Livingston, MPP
Executive Director, CEO

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