

Supporting an Alcohol-Ad Free Environment - Massachusetts (SAFE-MA)

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MBTA Exposes Massachusetts Youth to Alcohol Ads Enticing Them to Drink

Youth Demand State Ban on Alcohol Ads on Their “School Buses”

BOSTON, MA (March 14, 2010) -- Demonstrators will gather March 16th, 2010, from 3pm-5pm at the Boston Common, across from the State House, to show public support for ending alcohol advertising on state property, including the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), which serves as the public transit system for Greater Boston.

Brought together by the **Supporting an Alcohol-Ad Free Environment - Massachusetts** coalition (SAFE-MA), youth and community supporters will protest against the MBTA’s use of T trains—which serve as “school buses” for 9,600 Boston youth—to promote alcohol use. By this action, they hope to gain additional support from The Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, who will decide March 17th, 2010 whether to advance ***HB 1113: an act prohibiting alcohol advertising on Commonwealth property***, introduced by Representative Martin J. Walsh (D – 13th Suffolk).

This is the first state level legislation of its kind in the United States. “The state is allowing alcohol companies to use the MBTA subway system to bombard citizens of the Commonwealth—and youth in particular—with alcohol advertising that is clearly trying to entice young people to drink, and to drink heavily,” stated Mike Siegel, MD, of the Boston University School of Public Health. “Alcohol advertising that kids in the Commonwealth see on the T influences their decisions to start drinking. Thus, the state is allowing alcohol companies to use the MBTA subway system to recruit new underage drinkers.”

In a 2005 public opinion poll, 82% of Boston youth (under 21) said they want the T to STOP exposing them to alcohol ads. Yet alcohol is widely advertised throughout the T public transportation system in and on buses and trains, in stations, and as train wraps.

A 2009 study published in the American Journal of Public Health concluded that alcohol ads were viewed an estimated 18,270 times by Boston Public School student transit passengers (grades 5 to 12) during an average weekday. These MBTA ads are equivalent to running 15 Super Bowl commercials in their power to expose vulnerable youth to inappropriate alcohol advertising.

A slew of studies over the past 5/10 years show that greater exposure to alcohol advertising contributes to an increase in drinking among underage youth. The more alcohol ads young people see, the more they drink and drink to excess. ***HB 1113*** will ensure a complete ban on alcohol advertising on public property in Massachusetts, and thus effectively reduce youth drinking and related harmful behavior.

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