

Later bar closings? State bill to allow them needs sober examination: Guest commentary



By Dana Sherrod

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On the surface, the “Let Our Communities Adjust Late Night Act” (“LOCAL”), which proposes extending last call at bars and restaurants from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m., seems to be a big step towards enhancing nightlife in communities across California.

Proponents of the bill, [Senate Bill 384](#), say later hours of alcohol sales will create more attractive tourist destinations and could even encourage safer nightlife by creating legal and permitted spaces for people to congregate past 2 a.m.

But public health data tells a different story, one that directly counters the claim that longer hours will promote increased safety for socializers and residents alike.

Research has long demonstrated the link between increased alcohol availability and increased public health and safety problems.

A systematic research review conducted by the U.S. Community Prevention Services Task Force, chaired by former Los Angeles County Department of Public Health director Jonathan Fielding, found cities that extended hours of alcohol service by two or more hours saw an increase in problems such as violent crimes, emergency department visits, alcohol-impaired driving and motor vehicle crashes.

That means extending alcohol service hours from 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. could have serious consequences for South Bay residents — and people across L.A. County — who already shoulder the heavy burdens of excessive alcohol consumption.

Each year, alcohol-related problems take approximately 2,800 lives in the county, accounting for approximately 80,000 years of potential life lost, and costing the county an estimated \$10.3 billion a year. That's \$1,000 a year for every child and adult in the county!

Additionally, a recent report from the county Department of Public Health showed that the South Bay region, which includes cities such as Carson, Gardena, Redondo Beach, Rancho Palos Verdes and San Pedro, ranked third in the county for rates of alcohol-related violent crimes, emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

We cannot afford to increase the already-severe burdens of excessive alcohol, especially intoxicated driving. While supporters of the bill claim that ridesharing services such as Uber or Lyft are helping to reduce the number of impaired drivers behind the wheel, this simply isn't the case. A study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology reported that Uber's rideshare service had no impact on reducing drunk-driving fatalities.

The data is clear: Despite our own beliefs, this bill presents a challenge to public health and safety in our communities that are already overburdened by alcohol challenges.

Our policymakers must hold the line between increased revenue for a few and public health and safety problems for the many.

Concerned South Bay residents are encouraged to take two minutes to voice their reservations at www.AlcoholJustice.org. Responses will be sent directly to your elected senator and Assemblymember, as well as the author of the bill.

Dana Sherrod, a Harbor City resident, is a member of the [California Alcohol Policy Alliance](#), a statewide group advocating reform of alcohol policies to protect public health and safety.