

Marin Voice: Barbershop beer bill will increase alcohol-related harm

By Michael Scippa

07/21/16

A veritable tsunami of alcohol-related harm could very well be in California's forecast, as the state Legislature seems determined to allow 42,000-plus beauty salons and barber shops to serve free alcohol to customers.

This would happen if AB1322 — “the Drybar Bill” — is passed and signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Beer and wine (and surely spirits down the line) will flow freely without licenses, permits, monitoring, Responsible Beverage Service training or enforcement of current regulations.

California now suffers more than \$22 billion in alcohol-related harm annually with 10,000 alcohol-related deaths.

Alcohol Justice has estimated that if AB1322 becomes law, the number of venues allowed to serve alcohol in the state will increase by 41 percent. Additional alcohol-related harm is inevitable with increased availability.

Yet voices of reason are in short supply in Sacramento, while those in denial of the dangers of allowing unlicensed, unmonitored free booze push this bill through the legislative pipeline.

This irresponsible legislation would allow:

- Alcohol to be served without a license at 42,000-plus new venues in California.
- Alcohol to be served without any requirements for proper training of the barbers and beauticians on how to monitor or responsibly serve.
- Alcohol to be purchased by barbershops and beauty salons, without any regard for the safeguards of shipping through the established wholesale/retail tier, increasing the potential for altered products, moonshine and tax evasion.
- Alcohol to be poured and consumed in venues, which invariably will include minors.
- Alcohol to be served without any regard to the density of alcohol licensed outlets or consideration of proximity to schools, churches or other vulnerable institutions.
- No provisions for monitoring or enforcement of the law or the meaningless restrictions included in the bill.

- No proof of the necessity of this law, as no analysis even estimates current serving of drinks at salons or barber shops or demonstrates the need for the nearly complete deregulation of alcohol service at such venues.
- Potential liability for drunk driving and aggressive crimes by businesses that serve beer and wine without a license, without training and without the insurance that would normally be required of a state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) licensed facility.

It is a sad testament to the power of big alcohol to negatively influence government to put the health and safety of all residents and visitors behind the special interests who proposed this drastic change to the laws that govern alcohol in California.

San Rafael-based Alcohol Justice and the statewide California Alcohol Policy Alliance have led the opposition, which includes numerous individuals and these organizations:

- Asian American Drug Abuse Program, Inc.
- California Council on Alcohol Problems
- Friday Night Live
- Institute for Public Strategies
- Los Angeles Drug and Alcohol Policy Alliance
- Lutheran Office of Public Policy — California
- Paso por Paso
- San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition
- Saving Lives Drug & Alcohol Coalition
- Youth for Justice

It is quite disturbing to those concerned with the public health and safety ramifications of the bill that the state ABC, the state Department of Public Health, and the state Board of Barbering and Cosmetology do not seem to be concerned at all.

Barbershops or beauty salons that wish to serve alcohol should simply apply for the appropriate license, pay the necessary fees, and be subject to monitoring, enforcement and beverage service training requirements that all other servers of alcohol in California must follow under current law and the ABC.

When the Legislature reconvenes from summer recess on Aug. 1, AB 1322 faces one more committee vote in the Senate, and a full Senate floor vote, before heading to the governor.

Previously, the bill passed through the Assembly. We implore the senate, Gov. Brown, Attorney General Kamala Harris and ABC officials to help safeguard public health and safety and reduce alcohol-related harm in California. Stop AB 1322.

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