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Can California Afford the Costs of Late Last Calls?

As CA Cities Choke in Debt, New Analysis Shows Crushing Costs from AB 342's Early Morning Bar Hours

SAN RAFAEL, Calif., May 20, 2025 (PRNewswire)—Between law enforcement, reckless driving, crime, and injuries, the financial burden from 4 A.M. last call times may exceed \$2 billion over 5 years, according to an analysis just released by Alcohol Justice. The costs far exceed the benefits, calling into question the wisdom of state legislator efforts to extend last calls through Assembly Bill 342 (Haney, D- San Francisco). These costs are driven by spiraling costs from emergency services, law enforcement, motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and violent crime, along with broader economic disruption.

"Extending last call times only benefits a handful of bars, while spreading the cost of alcohol harm over everyone," said Raul Verdugo, Director of Advocacy for Alcohol Justice. *"Year after year, Californians have spoken out against extended last call times. It's time the legislature listened."*

"California's health officers are deeply concerned about the harms associated with extending the alcohol service hours," said Kat DeBurgh, Executive Director, Health Officers Association of California. *"AB 342 ignores decades of public health evidence showing that later last calls leads to more injuries, hospitalizations and deaths. These are preventable harms. At a time when alcohol-related mortality has increased 70% in just six years, we urge the Legislature to prioritize community health by rejecting AB 342."*

Although the bill was conceived to help San Francisco, it allows any city to establish weekend 4 a.m. zones of arbitrary size—and those zones would impact every other city in the area. Substantial research shows how alcohol harm spreads out around neighboring communities, including:

- [A 2008 report from Ventura County Behavioral Health](#) showing that intoxicated drivers travel 7 to 40 miles before being stopped.
- [An analysis of New York state arrests](#) showing that counties bordering another county with extended last call times still saw increased DUI arrests.
- [A comparison of alcohol-related freeway deaths in the San Francisco Bay Area](#), showing that crashes are 50% to 120% more likely to occur coming out of the cities of Oakland and San Francisco than into them.

“It’s easy for lawmakers to pretend their cities are the only ones that exist,” said Miryom Yisrael, Chief Operating Officer of Alcohol Justice. *“But most of us live in residential areas, where the party isn’t always happening, but the crashes sure are.”*

The new cost analysis replicates the landmark 2019 cost study from Meena Subbaraman and William Kerr of the Alcohol Research Group. This study looked at the impacts per extra drink sold in Los Angeles if that city extended its last call times to 4 A.M. seven days a week. For the new analysis, the impact-per-drink was extended to the entire state, limited to just weekend early mornings, and adjusted for inflation. Assuming just 1 in every 20 bars and restaurants in the state adopt extended last call times, the costs would top \$376 million per year, and \$2.046 billion over five years. Costs for individual cities include:

- San Francisco: \$27.2 million/year, \$150 million over 5 years
- Los Angeles: \$27.9 million/year, \$154 million over 5 years
- San Diego: \$22.1 million/year, \$122 million over 5 years
- Sacramento: \$10.9 million/year, \$60.4 million over 5 years

This comes at a time when city after city is contemplating painful cuts to needed services, forced into austerity by budget holes.

“From the desert to the redwoods, our cities’ budgets are drowning in debt,” said Carson Benowitz-Fredericks, Research Director for Alcohol Justice. *“Ad hoc efforts to create Bourbon St. on Main St. will suck money away from public transit, housing, EMS, recovery services—everything that makes a city livable.”*

“We’ve always known that late last calls bring a lot risks and harm,” said Verdugo. *“What we’re realizing is that they’re also financially devastating. We can’t afford it. We call on the California legislature to keep common-sense last calls in place and reject AB 342.”*