

**TESTIMONY OF CHRIS WAGNER**  
**Project Extra Mile**  
**LB 584 – General Affairs Committee**  
**February 11, 2019**

Good afternoon, Chairman Briese and members of the committee. My name is Chris Wagner, and I am the executive director of Project Extra Mile, a network of community partnerships across the state working to prevent excessive alcohol consumption, including underage drinking and its tragic consequences. We are here today in opposition of LB 584.

As I sit before you today, Nebraska's health ranking continues its decline, dropping two more places from last year from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> best. This is largely due to lack of progress in addressing our high excessive drinking rates. Each year, the United Health Foundation's report identifies key challenges that are holding us back – our high prevalence of binge/excessive drinking has been the only challenge that's been identified in every report for the past nine years. It's a problem that can't be explained away as bad individual decisions – it's one that needs policy solutions to change the environment in which these decisions are made.

One recommended, evidence-based solution is controlling the availability of alcohol by regulating alcohol outlet density. The easier alcohol is to obtain, the more problems we can expect to incur. The scientific literature links higher outlet density with increased assaults, motor vehicle crashes, self-reported injuries, domestic violence, child abuse, and sexually-transmitted infections.

While on its face LB 584 would appear to level the playing field for farm wineries, the bill exacerbates our problems by allowing wineries to not only sell their products but expands their ability to sell any alcoholic beverage year-round instead of at specific events that require local approval. Furthermore, it increases the number of outlets that can sell winery products from one to four. This is problematic because these outlets will likely target population centers that already have a sufficient, or even a disproportionate, number of alcohol outlets.

If we hope to improve our binge drinking rate from 5<sup>th</sup> worst in the country, we're going to have to stop chipping away at our laws and start strengthening them by addressing the availability, price and marketing of alcohol. In doing so, we can positively change the environment in which decisions are made. This committee could start this process by indefinitely postponing LB 584. Thank you for your time.