

National Alliance to Prevent Underage Drinking

1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20009-5728

March __, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1001 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We are writing to respectfully urge you to fund programs authorized by the Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act (Public Law 109-422) as closely as possible to the total authorized level of \$18 million in the fiscal year 2010 appropriations process.

We greatly appreciate the Committee's past support of enhanced national efforts to combat underage alcohol use and abuse. In particular, we are pleased to see progress towards full funding for STOP Act programs in the FY2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill.

As you know, while communities are faced with a number of substance abuse issues, alcohol remains the nation's number one youth drug problem, causing 5,000 deaths per year among persons under 21. In 2005, there were more than 145,000 emergency rooms visits by youth 12 to 20 years for injuries and other conditions linked to alcohol. Each day, some 5,000 children under the age of 16 will take their first alcoholic drink – and research has shown that adolescents who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence as an adult than those who wait until age 21.

To address those staggering statistics, the Surgeon General's office in 2007 called for a concerted national effort to prevent and reduce underage drinking. STOP Act funding is crucial to supporting such action at both the federal and local levels. For this reason, we urge you to ensure that the provisions of the Act are funded in the fiscal year 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Act to the following agencies at the following levels authorized in the STOP Act:

Department of Health and Human Services:

- Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking; Annual Report on State Underage Drinking and Prevention and Enforcement Activities: \$1 million

Working Together at the Federal Level to Reduce Underage Drinking and its Harms....

Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

- National adult-oriented media campaign to prevent underage drinking: \$1 million
- Community-based Coalition Enhancement Grants to Prevent Underage Drinking for Current or Past Drug Free Communities Grantees: \$5 million

Department of Education:

- Grants Directed at Preventing and Reducing Alcohol Abuse at Institutions of Higher Education: \$5 million

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Expansion of research capabilities to capture new surveillance data on underage drinking and continue its work to monitor and report on youth exposure to alcohol advertising: \$6 million.

Historically, alcohol consumption increases in difficult financial times, making resources for prevention of underage drinking even more critical. It is imperative that the STOP Act's comprehensive approach be fully funded so that underage drinking and its related consequences can be reduced in communities throughout the country. The STOP Act is a critical component of our nation's strategy in keeping our communities alcohol and drug-free. Please ensure that the STOP Act is fully funded at a level of \$18 million in the fiscal year 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill.

Should you need further information, please contact Kelly Lieupo of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America at 703-706-0560 ext. 241, or Kim Crump of the Center for Science in the Public Interest at 202-777-8338.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important request.

Sincerely,