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April 12, 2017

Dear Representative:

On behalf the approximately 40,000 active and retired Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Officers, including almost 200 Liquor Control Enforcement Officers who are on the front lines of the battle to protect Pennsylvanians from the dangers of alcohol abuse, the Fraternal Order of Police, Pennsylvania State Lodge, opposes House Bill 438 and House Bill 991.

HB 438 increases the sale of spirits-to-go, adding 12,000 retail and hotel licensees to sell up to 3,000 milliliters (roughly 4 bottles) of alcohol for off-site consumption. HB 991 adds agency stores to the system, which would increase the number of liquor stores from 600 to 2,600.

The Fraternal Order of Police has consistently opposed the privatization of liquor sales because we believe that privatization will result in more alcohol abuse, more alcohol-related crimes, and a greater risk of harm to law enforcement officers and to the civilians we are sworn to protect. The Center for Disease Control has linked privatization of alcohol sales to increased alcohol consumption. The Department of Justice has repeatedly documented the clear connection between alcohol-consumption rates and crime rates. The connections are clear.

By expanding access to alcohol, HB 438 and HB 991 will increase the strain on state Liquor Control Enforcement Officers and also our local police departments, who will be forced to address the expected increase in alcohol-related crimes without any additional manpower, funding or training. The prospect of adding an additional 12,000 retail alcohol sale locations is particularly troubling.

The PA FOP does not oppose common sense reforms to the liquor control and enforcement system in Pennsylvania. But given the stakes involved, we favor modernization of the current state-store system over privatization, with an emphasis on providing enhanced manpower, training and enforcement tools to address the risks associated with alcohol consumption at the state and local level.

Because of their impact on alcohol access and the incidence of alcohol-related crimes, and the related harms to law enforcement officers and public safety, the Pennsylvania FOP opposes HB 438 and HB 991. We ask that you oppose those bills and any other attempts to expand alcohol use and abuse by liquor privatization. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Les Neri
President
Pennsylvania State Lodge