



TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Urban and Families and Local Affairs

DATE: August 25, 2009

RE: Assembly Bill 106, Support

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As mentioned I represent UW Health, and the AWARE (All Wisconsin Alcohol Risk Education) Coalition. I am here testifying in support of Assembly Bill 106. AB 106 is a step in the right direction. Some AWARE members, like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, oppose the bill because they feel it doesn't go far enough in reinforcing 21 as the legal drinking age as it is in Wisconsin and the entire U.S. In the interest of progress, AWARE supports AB 106.

Dr. Paul Grossberg from the UW Madison School of Medicine and Public Health who is an expert in the effects of alcohol on pediatric brain development unfortunately could not be here today but I have submitted written testimony on his behalf.

The leaders of UW Health recognized nearly a year ago that alcohol usage in Wisconsin is a public health crisis. As we looked around the state we were unable to locate a comprehensive statewide group advocating for health and safety as it relates to alcohol abuse. It was with that idea and really an extension of the Wisconsin idea, that AWARE was created to proactively support change and education about alcohol risks. In November AWARE was launched and the support has been, quite frankly, overwhelming.

To date AWARE has over 50 different health, law enforcement, community, education and local units of government.

Allow me briefly to share with you some staggering facts about alcohol consumption in WI:

AWARE Coalition Members

Affinity Health System
Aurora Health Care
Bay Area Community Council
Beloit Memorial Hospital
BRAVO is Building Responsible Alcohol Values and Options
Children's Hospital and Health System
Columbia County Connects
Dane County
Edgerton Coalition for a Health Community
Focus on Community, Racine
Froedtert & Community Health
Gundersen Lutheran
La Crosse County Board of Supervisors
Madison Mayor's Office
Marathon Cty. Alcohol & Other Drugs Partnership Council
Marathon County Health Department
Marshfield Clinic
Medical College of Wisconsin
Medical Students for Legislative Action
Meriter Health Services
Milwaukee Deputy Sheriffs Association
Ministry Health Care
Mothers Against Drunk Driving
Ntl. Assoc. of Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Counselors
Reedsburg Area Medical Center
Resource Center on Impaired Driving
Rock County Partners in Prevention
Rock County Youth2Youth
Rogers Behavioral Health System
Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative
St. Joseph's Community Health Services, Hillsboro
Southern Alliance Regional Council (SARC)
Unity Health Insurance
UW Health
Vernon County Partnership Council
Watertown Parent Advisory on Underage Drinking
WI Alcohol & Drug Treatment Providers Assoc.
WI Assoc. of Local Health Departments and Boards
WI Assoc. on Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse
WI Assoc. of Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Counselors
WI Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physc.
WI County Police Association
WI District Attorneys Association
WI Hospital Association
WI Medical Society
WI Nurses Association
WI Public Health Association
WI Public Health Council
WI Sheriffs & Deputy Sheriffs Association
WI State Laboratory of Hygiene
WPS Health Insurance

- WI Leads the country with the highest U.S. rates of alcohol consumption, binge drinking and heavy drinking.
- Highest alcohol use in the country among high school students.
- WI drunk driving fatalities have actually increased when nationwide fatalities have decreased.
- It is estimated that over half of Wisconsin's prison population have AODA issues.
- Underage alcohol consumption can have profound effects on adolescent brain development.

The culture of drinking in this state needs to change.

AWARE is a coalition comprised in part of health care providers and caregivers who want to work to begin building a healthier Wisconsin and to promote wellness and protect teens and their families, as well as our communities from the effects of underage drinking and the potential for abuse.

AB 106 is a first step in the beginning of a long journey to preventing underage drinking and reversing the deadly drinking culture in Wisconsin.