



April 9, 2008

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

RE: House Bill 879 (Love) -- Veto

Dear Governor O'Malley,

We write to ask you to veto House Bill 879. Alcohol industry lobbyists are working overtime to ensure young people's easy access to alcopops in the State of Maryland. House Bill 879 would change state law to classify flavored malt beverages (a.k.a. alcopops) as "beer". If this change were enacted, it would keep tax rates on the products very low by locking in a 9-cent-per-gallon beer tax, as opposed to the state's \$1.50 tax on distilled spirits. Higher taxes help keep the products out of the hands of youth. That's why we need you to act now.

Just last month, following California and Maine's lead, the state of Utah decided alcopops were too dangerous to youth and ordered that sales be limited to state run liquor stores. Nationwide, financially strapped states are quickly recognizing the benefits of raising new revenue through properly taxing alcopops, while simultaneously reducing the costs of alcohol-related harms.

Big Alcohol is undermining these efforts by keeping the youth-friendly products cheap and readily available in convenience stores. It's a move that could have lasting impact on young people. Research shows that youth are four times more likely to develop alcohol problems if they start drinking before age 15.

Maryland bill HB 879 was authored by Mary Ann E. Love, chair of the House Alcoholic Beverages Subcommittee and recipient of more campaign contributions in 2006 from the alcohol industry than from any other source.

We hope that people who truly care about the youth of Maryland will help us stop this deceptive legislation. Marin Institute and our friends in the public health community, advocate the taxing of these alcoholic beverages appropriately as distilled spirits as a means to discourage underage drinking. For these mentioned reasons we ask you to do the right thing and veto House Bill 879.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Scippa
Advocacy Director

24 Belvedere Street | San Rafael, California 94901 | 415-456-5692 | fax 415-456-0491

www.MarinInstitute.org