

June 15, 2010

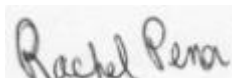
Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein, Chair
Judiciary, Committee, New York State Assembly
LOB 831
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Assemblywoman Weinstein:

I am writing on behalf of Healthy Communities that Care Coalition of Livingston County to ask for your support of Bill Number A10899 introduced by Assembly Member Robin Schimminger and Bill Number S7018 introduced by Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer. The bills will help address the growing problem we see with youth in our community as it pertains to statutes surrounding tickets for underage possession for persons under 21 (ABC Section 65c) and possession of marijuana (PL 221.05). The bills address both the ABC and marijuana issues by adding increased fines after a period of time and the issuance of warrants for failure to complete any sentencing order of the court.

The issues as we understand them, not only affect the courts ability to insure attendance and completion of sentencing orders but it also sends a message to the offenders that “nothing will happen” if the court obligations are not fulfilled. For the past 8 years our coalition has worked very hard to address community norms that support underage drinking and marijuana use. We know that if we can change these norms we will reduce the number of youth that use these substances. Currently courts lack the tools to enforce the sentences due to no statutory authority. For example, a judge can issue a sentence, but because a warrant cannot be issued, there is no way to follow up on the court mandate. There are many cases that remain open because there is no way to follow up on mandates. There also is an increasing perception among youth that there is no punishment to alcohol consumption/substance use as a minor. Failure by the courts to dispose of these cases leads to an erosion in the public’s trust and confidence to fulfill its duties. Lack of authority deprives the defendants of the rehabilitation benefits that the sentence is designed to deliver. Giving the courts the ability to ensure that youth in our community get the message that underage alcohol use and marijuana use will not be tolerated will help us reach our goals of reducing youth alcohol and marijuana use. With the support of the proposed legislation, our hope would be that the judicial system will have more leverage to enforce sentencing. Additionally, this legislation will ensure that the offender gets the educational or counseling classes / treatment that may be needed to prevent further legal problems as they enter into adulthood.

Please consider supporting the Bills on behalf of all youth in New York State.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rachel Pera". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sincerely,

Rachel Pena
Project Director

Your Logo Here or delete this text

Healthy Communities that Care

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