



## NDPHA Resolution to Use Harm Reduction Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-related Harm

Whereas North Dakota is the leading binge drinking state measured by the largest number of drinks consumed on an occasion in the past 30 days among adults who reported binge drinking (5.9), and is still the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading binge drinking state among adults, with a prevalence of 22.7% of adults aged 18 or greater, trailing only Iowa and Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas North Dakota is a state that values life, and yet North Dakota ranks as the #47 worst state for alcohol deaths, with 17.2 deaths per 100,000, which is twice the national average of 9.9; and this number has increased by 58% from 2005 (10.9) to 2018 (17.2).<sup>1</sup>

Whereas alcohol is responsible for substantial societal and personal harm,<sup>2,3</sup> and chronic excessive alcohol use contributes directly to cardiovascular disease,<sup>4</sup> nutritional deficiency,<sup>5</sup> cancer,<sup>6</sup> accelerated aging,<sup>7</sup> gastrointestinal deaths, liver cirrhosis in younger adults,<sup>8</sup> injuries, and alcohol use disorders.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas among all U.S. cirrhosis deaths in 2015, approximately 49.5% were related to alcohol use and occurred in younger adults ages 25-34,<sup>9</sup> so this is a health concern for all ages.

Whereas there is increasing evidence that there is no level of alcohol intake that is considered beneficial to health.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas underage drinking is a common problem, including businesses failing compliance checks regarding selling alcohol to minors.<sup>11-13</sup>

Whereas alcohol remains low cost and is become more affordable, not less,<sup>14</sup> despite global evidence that alcohol per capita consumption is associated with affordability,<sup>15</sup> and the alcohol industry indiscriminately promotes its products to increase sales, without being held responsible for the personal and societal harm caused by alcohol misuse.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas persistently high levels of alcohol harm create a heavy social, economic, and health burden. For example, one in every 10 deaths in the European region is caused by alcohol every year, and nearly one in every four deaths among young adults aged 20–24 years is due to alcohol products.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in loss of purpose for many people, loss of jobs, and being required to work from home, so that drinking during the day increased; and it became easier to purchase alcohol, including curbside pickup, resulting in a 25% increase in alcohol-related deaths in 2020.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas alcohol is a psychoactive substance and a known carcinogen, which causes substantial harms to alcohol users, their families, communities, as well as societies and economies in general, it is far less regulated than tobacco, including the regulations of the level of taxation.

Whereas alcohol consumption is considered a social norm, resulting in many people in society resisting any restrictions on alcohol, so that alcohol taxes have been under-utilized as a public health measure. North Dakota's excise tax is \$0.50/gallon, \$0.16/gallon and \$2.50/gallon for wine, beer, and liquor, respectively, ranking 32<sup>nd</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> highest in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas the state of Washington has the highest alcohol excise tax, with \$33.22 per gallon for liquor; and is among the states with the lowest prevalence of binge drinking (15.4%), and the lowest number of drinks consumed when drinking (5.3).<sup>19</sup>

Whereas the CDC Community Preventive Services Task Force has ranked increasing alcohol excise taxes to prevent excessive alcohol use and other harms as an evidence-based best practice, with the ability to decrease total alcohol consumption by 7.7% for every 10% increase in price.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas people consistently value health as the most important condition for a happy and flourishing life,<sup>21</sup> and while alcohol is known to increase the feeling of social cohesiveness; in fact, excess alcohol consumption compromises health, happiness and human flourishing to a great degree.

Whereas Governor Doug and First Lady Kathryn Burgum have established the Recovery Reinvented program to eliminate the shame and stigma of addiction in North Dakota and to help all persons in North Dakota to prevent chemical misuse from beginning, treat addiction for all persons seeking help, and support a life of recovery.

Therefore, be it resolved that the North Dakota Public Health Association recommends

1. Increase the excise tax on liquor from \$2.50/gallon to \$33.22/gallon.
2. The North Dakota legislature conduct a study to determine ways to hold the alcohol industry responsible for the costs of alcohol harms to society.
3. The legislature make alcohol-related policy decisions from a Health in All Policies perspective, rather than seeing the alcohol industry as an economic generator.
4. Decrease the density of alcohol sales outlets.
5. Reduce the hours and the days of alcohol sales.
6. Forbid direct to consumer advertising of alcohol products.
7. Increase the visibility of "alcohol can cause serious harm" messaging on alcohol product packaging.

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