



Dear Council Members and Staff:

I am writing in response to the proposal set forth by Councilmember Jane Prince and Councilmember Dai Thao to change the distance requirements in St. Paul from one half mile to three hundred feet for an off premise “wine only” license.

We are concerned for several reasons. We initially heard of this proposed change as a response to one retailer asking to open a wine shop next to their existing brewpub. There are questions on the legality of a manufacturer to hold both licenses. We are now hearing this proposal is to generate needed tax revenue for the City of St. Paul. Clarity as to the goal of this proposal would be helpful.

Has there been a loud demand from consumers to have more outlets to purchase alcohol off premise? After talking to all of the off-sale establishments in St. Paul, they have not heard of a public outcry for more outlets. Also, the proposed site is within the already well-established and mindful ordinance of one-half mile of two off sale establishments. How will this impact those already established businesses that sell wine? Will this not split the pie even further?

The City of St. Paul recently passed an ordinance that stopped all customers from entering an off-sale establishment when under the age of 21. This was discussed and passed as a need to limit the access of alcohol exposure to underage individuals. Now the city is looking at expanding to more licenses. This raises definite public safety concerns.

Lastly, on premise can already sell off premise packages during the executive order period. Councilmember Prince states that the executive orders to allow this are only temporary, but so is the pandemic she speaks of.

Passing this ordinance change is a drastic response to a temporary situation and putting public safety on the back burner seems unwise. The half a mile restriction was put in place for a reason. Cities across the nation are choosing not to renew or allow additional off premise licenses as it has been proven, higher density of off-



premise businesses cause a multitude of public safety problems such as increased exposure and access to minors.

The tax paying business owners, who abide by current and set laws and ordinances, strongly oppose this change in an ordinance that was strongly supported and maintained by the community and its citizens. A policy that would potentially allow for 4 additional off premise “wine only” licenses within a half a mile or one every city block is nowhere to be found in Minnesota or around the nation. This sets a bad precedent and has the potential for unintended consequences.

When will this one license holder want to put his or her own beer in the "wine shop"? When will the license holder come back to you and ask for hard liquor when the neighborhood demands it? What are you going to tell the compliant businesses within the already set half a mile ordinance when their businesses suffer as a result?

This is a change that will cause more problems than it solves.

Thank you for your time and please contact me with any and all questions and concerns. I look forward to working with you on this issue and many others to come.

Tony Chesak  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA)  
[tony@mlba.com](mailto:tony@mlba.com)  
(651) 470-7236 cell  
(651) 772-0910 office