



PASS S.B. 75 BAN EXTREME-STRENGTH ALCOHOL IN MARYLAND

Extreme-strength alcohol poses a real threat to college students

- Nationally, more than 1,800 college students die each year as a result of alcohol – a rate of nearly five per day. Nearly 600,000 are injured; nearly 700,000 are assaulted; and nearly 100,000 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault.¹
- In Maryland, approximately one in five college students meet the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse, and one in three report having driven with a drinking driver.²
- Extreme-strength alcohol poses a real threat to college students because:
 - They are more likely to drink distilled spirits than they were 20 years ago;³
 - They tend to “overpour” drinks,⁴ making a strong drink stronger in a student’s hands; and
 - The tasteless, odorless, colorless nature of extreme-strength alcohol makes it almost impossible for inexperienced or unsuspecting drinkers to know what they are drinking and adjust their behavior accordingly.
- Underage binge drinkers are 36.5 times more likely to drink extreme-strength alcohol than underage non-bingers.⁵

Extreme-strength alcohol’s low price makes it even more dangerous

- Recognized by leading brand names Everclear and Gem Clear, grain alcohol is a distilled neutral spirit that lacks a distinctive taste or smell.
- A 750ML bottle of Everclear or Gem Clear ranges in price from \$15 to \$17.
- The federal government defines a “drink” as 1.5 ounces of 80 proof alcohol.⁶ A 750 ML (25.36 ounce) bottle of 190 proof grain alcohol contains approximately 16.9 drinks.
- At \$15 per bottle, this is *less than a dollar a drink*.

At least 16 states ban sales of extreme-strength alcohol

- Maryland’s neighbors ban sales of extreme-strength alcohol, with limited exceptions for industrial, commercial, culinary, or medical uses:
 - **Virginia:** Banned above 101 proof or 50.5% ABV.⁷
 - **Pennsylvania:** Banned at or above 190 proof or 95% ABV.⁸
 - **West Virginia:** Banned at or above 190 proof or 95% ABV.⁹
- Other states’ bans go much farther than S.B. 75, including:
 - **California:** Banned above 120 proof or 60% ABV.¹⁰
 - **Florida:** Banned above 153 proof or 76.5% ABV (sales and consumption).¹¹
 - **Minnesota:** Banned above 160 proof or 80% ABV.¹²



THE MARYLAND COLLABORATIVE

TO REDUCE COLLEGE DRINKING AND RELATED PROBLEMS

REFERENCES

¹ Hingson RW, Zha W, Weitzman ER. Magnitude of and trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18-24, 1998-2005. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, July (Suppl 16): 12-20, 2009. <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/statssummaries/snapshot.aspx>. Accessed October 28, 2013.

² Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems. (2013). College Drinking in Maryland: A Status Report. Center on Young Adult Health and Development, University of Maryland School of Public Health, College Park, MD; and the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD. Available at www.marylandcollaborative.org/resources/docs/MDreport.pdf.

³ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/163787/drinkers-divide-beer-wine-favorite.aspx>.

⁴ White, A. M., Kraus, C. L., Flom, J. D., Kestenbaum, L. A., Mitchell, J. R., Shah, K. and Swartzwelder, H. S. (2005), College Students Lack Knowledge of Standard Drink Volumes: Implications for Definitions of Risky Drinking Based on Survey Data. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 29: 631-638. Accessed October 25, 2013.

⁵ According to preliminary results from the first national survey to track youth alcohol consumption by brand. E-mail correspondence from Michael B. Siegel, Boston University School of Public Health, to David Jernigan, 13 January 2014.

⁶ <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/ToolsResources/DrinkSizeCalculator.asp>

⁷ VA Administrative Code Title 3 Agency 5 Chapter 70 §200 2013 <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+reg+3VAC5-70-200>

⁸ Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board Regulations Title 40 PA CODE §11.3 A (2013)

⁹ Interview with West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Commission 2013

¹⁰ Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 23403 (2013)

¹¹ Florida Code Title XXIV Alcohol Beverages and Tobacco Chapter 565.07 (2013)

¹² Minn. Stat. § 340A.506 (2013)