

# Princess Anne Social Host Ordinance

Communities across the country have responded to loud and unruly house parties with local ordinances to support safe and quiet neighborhoods. A local social host ordinance in the Town of Princess Anne can provide law enforcement a new tool for reducing the number and severity of underage drinking and loud or unruly parties.



## THE PROBLEM

- Close to 30% of UMES students (legal-aged and under 21) binge drink at least monthly.
- 23% of UMES students report binge drinking one to four plus times in a month while 6.7% reported drinking five or more times a month.<sup>1</sup>
- The 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data indicate that 22.7% of middle and high school students in Somerset County had five or more drinks during one occasion in the past month.<sup>2</sup>



## Excessive Drinking & Loud and Unruly Parties . . .

Excessive alcohol use among underage and college students is a serious public health issue. Excessive drinking among college students have been linked to increased risk for injuries, risky sexual behaviors, and violent behavior.<sup>3</sup>

CDC defines “excessive drinking” as any underage drinking, drinking by pregnant women, or binge drinking. “Binge drinking” refers to having five or more drinks for males, and four or more for females, in about two hours.<sup>4</sup>

Across the country, young people report alcohol is easy to get from social settings (noncommercial source of alcohol, often private parties), bars, and liquor stores.<sup>5</sup>

The same is true for UMES. 93% of UMES students reported that alcohol was either easy or very easy to obtain.<sup>1</sup> Reducing young people’s access to alcohol, in both social and commercial settings, is a critical step to addressing excessive drinking among college students.

**66% of UMES students under 21 and 55% between 21 and 25 drank alcohol at an off-campus party during the last month.<sup>1</sup>**

**Large crowds, public urination, vandalism, loud music, littering, sexual assaults & fights** -- parties can quickly escalate into serious problems and frequently provide young people access to alcohol.

**Taxpayers pay for these parties** -- in 2014 alone, the Princess Anne Police Department responded to 110 calls for service for large crowds or loud music and parties.<sup>6</sup> These multiple police calls for service divert law enforcement from other emergencies in the area, contributing to reduced police protection in the area overall.

**Anecdotal evidence suggests high school students often drink at college parties and their own house parties** -- creating negative consequences for the students, others around them and the surrounding community.

**By coming together to address these issues through the passage of a social host ordinance**, we are proactively working together to keep students safe, save lives and be good neighbors.

## Local social host ordinances . . .

- Allow law enforcement to write *civil* citations, similar to traffic tickets, to the property owners, property managers and/or hosts of loud and unruly parties;
- Levy a fine for a first offense and fines increasing in severity for subsequent offenses at the same location;
- Make law enforcement's job easier by not burdening them with the requirements of the current statewide criminal social host law.
- Can enable local governments to recover costs for repeated law enforcement or other emergency service responses to a property.

**Reduce loud and unruly parties on private property and the many problems associated with them.** Meaningful fines will deter tenants, property managers and property owners from hosting or allowing loud and unruly gatherings that disturb the peace and safety of Princess Anne neighborhoods.

**Reduce excessive drinking and related problems.** By reducing the number of loud and unruly parties where excessive drinking often occurs, the health, safety and success of our students and other young people in our community can be improved. A recent evaluation of social host ordinances operating across a range of California communities found that the ordinances that include strict liability and civil penalties reduced underage drinking at private parties, particularly among those who have already initiated alcohol use.<sup>7</sup>

**Free up law enforcement resources.** The ordinance, once enforced on a regular basis, will reduce the need to respond multiple times to disperse parties at problem locations, thereby freeing up resources to respond to regular and emergency situations and improve law enforcement services to the whole community.

## References

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