

Vote Explanation for SB 1801

From the desk of Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson

December 21, 2020

I voted no on SB 1801 because increasing access to alcohol through “cocktails-to-go” has its own set of costs and impacts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) caution us about increasing alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased stress can lead to increased alcohol use, and increased alcohol use brings with it a host of risks such as further increasing anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions; increasing incidents of violence, injuries, and motor vehicle crashes; and increasing the likelihood of experiencing long-term health issues such as liver disease, cancer, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure. The CDC also warns us that drinking alcohol weakens your body’s ability to fight infections, which increases the risk of complications and makes it harder to get better if you become ill. Here in Oregon we have some of the highest substance use disorder rates in the country, and the most common disorder in our State is an alcohol use disorder. This is one of the reasons why Oregon’s Substance Use Strategic Plan calls for decreasing access to alcohol.

We have also seen the need for substance use services increase during COVID-19, but at the same time some providers are providing care to fewer people because of COVID-19 restrictions. Increasing access to alcohol through “cocktails-to-go” will make it harder to address the growing behavioral health needs that COVID-19 has brought us. I remain concerned about the impacts of increasing access to alcohol, especially during this time when so many of our community members feel isolated and we are struggling to provide needed behavioral and other support services.