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
REFERENCES


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](http://www.marylandcollaborative.org/resources/docs/MDreport.pdf).


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.


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](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


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