



Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices
to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.

OMAHA COALITION MEETING
Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 9 a.m.

A G E N D A

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review of the September 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes
(*please contact PEM staff with corrections*)
- III. Nebraska's FY21 Highway Safety Plan: Bill Kovarik, NE Highway Safety Administrator
- IV. Focus Area Updates
 - a. Local
 - i. Infinity
 - ii. Reign Lounge
 - b. Policy
 - i. Status Update: Governor's Executive Orders
 - ii. LCC Legislative Letter
 - iii. American Journal of Public Health Commentary
 - iv. American Public Health Association & PEM Media
 - c. Enforcement
 - i. September 18-19 Compliance Check Results
 - ii. Delivery Services
 - iii. Overservice Enforcements
 - iv. Douglas County DUI Task Force
 - d. Youth
 - i. Youth Leadership Work Group
 - ii. October 8th Youth Leadership Council Meeting
 - 1. Next Meeting November 12th at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom
 - e. Awareness
 - i. Media Advocacy
 - 1. Norfolk Daily News: Letter to the Editor
 - 2. Crash vs. Accident
 - ii. October 2020 Research Summary available at www.projectextramile.org
- V. Additional Discussion/Announcements
- VI. Next Meeting Date: **November 4th, 9 am via Zoom**
Speakers: Lisa Spellman & Dr. Omar Rahman, UNMC – Efforts to address maternal & child health on the Pine Ridge Reservation

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

PEM presentation to PHAN on Alcohol & COVID-19 – October 22nd at 1 p.m.
Nebraska Liquor Control Commission Hearings – December 1 & 2, 2020

PROJECT EXTRA MILE

OMAHA METRO AREA COALITION MEETING MINUTES September 9, 2020

- I. Call to Order: Project Extra Mile Coalition Chair Jen Pollock called the meeting to order virtually via Zoom at 9 a.m.
- II. Welcome and Introductions: Welcome and introductions took place. Coalition members in attendance: Jennifer Pollock, Christon MacTaggart, Carey Pomykata, Maggie Ballard, Palistene Gray-Moore, Teri Mattran, Jim Timm, Sherri Cannon, Jona Beck, Wendy Evans, Andrea Frazier, Don Hoes, Crystal Fuller, and Sharona Crittenden. Staff members in attendance: Chris Wagner, Liene Topko, Beatha Kliewer and Erin Ayad.
- III. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the August 12, 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved. No additions or corrections were made.
- IV. Violence Against Women & Alcohol's Role: Christon MacTaggart with the Women's Fund of Omaha presented on alcohol's role in violence against women. She discussed the organization's work to address critical challenges through systems advocacy, including public policy and research. An increase in both 911 and victim services program calls has been observed early in the pandemic, and the organization is analyzing quarterly data to learn more about the impact of COVID-19 on violence. MacTaggart outlined the intersections between gender-based violence, sexual/domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking and how racism, poverty, culture, and individual vulnerabilities increase risk of victimization. Violence against women is often about power and control and is associated with other factors, including alcohol and other drug use. MacTaggart shared that law enforcement has reported a high percentage of cases involving alcohol. She emphasized that an increased focus on prevention is needed to address violence against women.
- V. Focus Area Updates:
 - a. Local
 - i. Liene Topko shared that Infinity, formerly Hustler Club, will be before the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) in the coming months for failure to pick up a liquor license issued in March.
 - ii. Topko also shared that the LCC denied a liquor license for the Reign Lounge in Florence. The business filed a motion for reconsideration with the LCC stating that the current manager has purchased the business, but the request was denied.
 - b. Policy
 - i. Chris Wagner shared a brief summary of the Policy Work Group meeting that was held on September 3rd. The group discussed the Governor's Executive Orders on alcohol as well as Legislative Resolution 450, the interim study introduced to discuss these policy changes. The interim study hearing date has not yet been scheduled.

- ii. Wagner also shared that PEM will be featured in the Public Health Association of Nebraska's Hot Topics webinar series in October to share information on alcohol and COVID-19.

- c. Enforcement

- i. Liene Topko briefly discussed alcohol retail compliance checks held in July and that operations will continue to ensure the safety of youth and our communities.

- d. Youth

- i. Erin Ayad shared that PEM is continuing work to resume Youth Leadership Council meetings and encouraged attendees to attend the Youth Work Group meeting to discuss youth engagement following the coalition meeting. A promotional flyer for the 2021 Youth Leadership Retreat was included in the packet.

- e. Awareness

- i. Erin Ayad shared that PEM will submit a letter to the editor regarding the need to hold adults accountable when they provide alcohol to minors in communities across the state. Several large underage drinking parties were recently reported in Stanton County.
 - ii. The September 2020 Research Summaries were provided in the meeting packets.

VI. Additional Discussion/Announcements: none

VII. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date: The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 14th at 9 a.m. virtually via Zoom.



NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

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For Immediate Release
Mon., September 21, 2020

24 Omaha Metro Businesses Cited for Selling Alcohol to Minors

Law enforcement committed to preventing underage drinking during pandemic

OMAHA, NEB - During a series of compliance checks at off-sale alcohol retailers in Douglas and Sarpy Counties during the months of July and September, 24 businesses were cited for selling alcohol to a minor.

The checks resulted in 24 (9%) of 271 retail outlets being cited for selling alcohol to a minor. A summary sheet of the compliance check results and a full list of businesses checked are available by [clicking here](#).

According to recent survey data from RTI International, adults are drinking more alcohol during the coronavirus pandemic. The results show that a person's average drinks per day has increased by 27 percent, while the frequency of binge drinking increased by 26 percent. Researchers believe this increase also applies to underage drinkers.

"It has been reported that alcohol sales have increased during the pandemic. This time has been an excellent opportunity for us to confirm that businesses continue to prioritize the refusal of sales to minors," said Bellevue Police Department Lieutenant Andy Jashinske. "The safety of our children and communities is our number one priority."

Four businesses cited are facing enhanced penalties due to prior sale to minor violations within the last four years, the time frame used by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to assess penalties. If found guilty, they will face mandatory days of closure (no alcohol sales allowed) and days of suspension that can be paid off

as a fine at \$100 per day according to the [LCC's penalty guidelines](#). Those businesses include:

- **Aldi 43, 4801 N 30th St**, Omaha (3/19);
- **La Economica, 5520 S 36th St**, Omaha (3/19, 12/14);
- **Mega Saver, 7204 Blondo St**, Omaha (5/18);
- **Mega Saver, 1357 NW Radial Hwy**, Omaha (7/18).

The other 20 businesses are facing their first sale to a minor violation within the last four years. If found guilty by the LCC, these businesses could be facing 10-20 days of suspension that they could choose to pay off as a fine at \$50 per day in lieu of suspension.

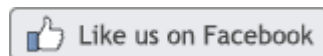
Due to regulatory changes intended to aid alcohol retailers during the pandemic, it's easier than ever to access alcohol in the State of Nebraska, which creates more costs and harms in communities across the state. Law enforcement operations to prevent both retail and social access to alcohol by youth will continue.

Forty officers from the Bellevue Police Department, La Vista Police Department, Omaha Police Department, and Sarpy County Sheriff's Office participated in the four-day, enhanced underage drinking enforcement effort.

To report underage drinking or adults providing alcohol to minors, call the statewide tip line at **1-866-Must-B-21 (687-8221)**. **It's anonymous, and it's the right call.** Individuals are urged to call 911 to report an underage drinking party in progress.

Heightened enforcements are supported by the Nebraska Department of Transportation - Highway Safety Office and Grant #93.243 under the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnership for Success Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare. The Nebraska Department of Transportation - Highway Safety Office also funds the tip line. Project Extra Mile helped to coordinate the enforcement efforts.

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Mission: Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms.



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YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Who: Students in 8th through 12th grades who want to make a difference in their communities

What: Young people are encouraged to take the lead in solving the problem of underage drinking in their community. Through Project Extra Mile's Youth Leadership Council, adult partners work with students to help reach their goals.

Why: Underage drinking is a leading public health problem. Alcohol contributes to more than 3,500 deaths among youth under 21 each year.

Where: Via Zoom – Please register at the following link in advance:
Meeting ID: 973 4892 7086
<https://zoom.us/j/97348927086>

When: All meetings will be 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM on the following dates:
Thursday, October 8, 2020
Thursday, November 12, 2020
Thursday, December 10, 2020

Get involved in several ways!

Meet with local and state officials to discuss underage alcohol use
Make recommendations on alcohol and other drug policies at school
Collaborate with law enforcement and other community agencies
Develop awareness materials and public service announcements

Questions? E-mail youth@projectextramile.org

Hold adults accountable

Written by Erin Ayad

OMAHA — A recent Norfolk Daily News editorial, “Irresponsible behavior of young people at party extends beyond drinking to COVID-19 concerns,” pointed to underage drinking as a significant public health problem in Nebraska. Parties like the ones that recently occurred in Stanton County put the entire community at risk.

Young people need to face the consequences of breaking the law. However, adults should also be held accountable when they provide alcohol to a minor, whether in a retail or social setting. Our communities need law enforcement to make every effort to discover the source of the alcohol when possible, and we thank Stanton County Sheriff’s Office for doing this. Adults should also ensure that their alcohol is not easily accessible by their children or children’s friends.

Under Nebraska law, adults who host an underage drinking party, or provide or sell alcohol to a minor, can be held civilly liable if the intoxicated minor injures or kills someone. In addition, adults can be convicted of a Class IIIA felony and spend up to three years in jail, receiving a \$10,000 fine or both if serious injury or death to any person occurs.

ERIN AYAD

Associate director, Project Extra Mile



RESEARCH SUMMARY

Date Compiled: October 2020

Key takeaways from included research:

- From 2000 through 2018, greater percentage increases in the rates of alcohol-induced deaths occurred in rural areas compared with urban areas overall, for both males and females. By 2018, rates were 18% higher for males and 23% higher for females in rural compared with urban areas.
- New research provides evidence of changes in alcohol use and associated consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to a range of negative physical health associations, excessive alcohol use may lead to or worsen existing mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, which may themselves be increasing during COVID-19.
- Any alcohol use during pregnancy is associated with subtle yet significant psychological and behavioral effects in children. Women should continue to be advised to abstain from alcohol consumption from conception throughout pregnancy.
- Alcohol-induced loss of consciousness, irrespective of overall alcohol consumption, is associated with a subsequent increase in the risk of dementia.
- Findings from a case-control investigation involving 11 U.S. health care facilities found that close contact with persons with known COVID-19 or going to locations that offer on-site eating and drinking options were associated with COVID-19 positivity. Adults with positive SARS-CoV-2 test results were approximately twice as likely to have reported dining at a restaurant than were those with negative SARS-CoV-2 test results.

Home delivery firms blamed for enabling problem drinkers

Written by Tom Wall

Alcohol charities are calling for tighter rules on online delivery firms amid growing concerns that they are making home drop-offs to problem drinkers and children aged under 18.

Recent research by Wrexham University found that age-verification measures used by suppliers and delivery firms were weak, with online checks easy to get around and couriers manually checking the age of fewer than half of alcohol purchasers.

Alcohol Change UK said the country's licensing laws were drafted before the advent of round-the-clock deliveries of alcohol and needed to be changed. "A shopkeeper or publican may come to know someone over time, realise they are drinking to excess, and either refuse to serve them or limit what they sell them," said Andrew Misell, director for Alcohol Change UK in Wales. "The growth of rapid doorstep-delivery companies adds a new dimension, which the legislation hasn't yet caught up with."

Misell said current safeguards were inadequate. "Given that the Licensing Act was written when online alcohol sales were in their infancy, it's time for a review and for some clear guidance from the UK government on what kind of age-verification they expect to see," he said.

Dr Katherine Severi, chief executive of the Institute of Alcohol Studies, said evidence showed that the easier it was to access alcohol, the greater the risk. "Licensing law prohibits the sale of alcohol to underage drinkers and intoxicated people but adherence to these rules becomes more challenging in contactless purchasing settings," she said.

She added that harmful drinking had been rising. "Addressing safeguarding issues and protecting vulnerable people is more important right now, given that research shows risky drinking has increased under lockdown," she said.

In the most serious situations, alcohol deliveries can be life-threatening. Julie O'Connor says she has been pleading with the delivery firm Uber Eats to stop helping her son smuggle 75cl bottles of vodka into the family home, as a serious relapse could kill him.

She claimed the firm's couriers had hidden alcohol deliveries in wheelie bins and flower beds for the 21-year-old to collect so his family wouldn't discover he had started drinking again. "I asked Uber Eats three times to stop bringing him vodka during lockdown but they refused," she said. "In the last few weeks, my husband caught my son lowering a rucksack on rope from his bedroom for an Uber driver to fill up with alcohol."

O'Connor, a retired council worker who lives in south London, said her son, who also has mental health problems, had been hospitalised several times and could die if he started drinking heavily again. "He has had 12 seizures in one day. More alcohol abuse could kill him," she said.

She says she first emailed the firm in March, asking it to stop making deliveries, after she found out her son was ordering bottles of vodka every couple of days via the Uber Eats app on his phone. The family was desperately trying to "control his drinking", she wrote, and "continuing to supply him with alcohol could contribute to him having a fatal seizure". Yet Uber Eats insisted it could not make any changes to his account "without his permission for privacy reasons".

O'Connor added that her son could have been much younger. "When Uber Eats drivers hid alcohol outside our house, they could not have checked his age. It is bad enough that they were delivering to a seriously ill man, but he could have been a child for all they knew."

Professor Vic Grout, co-author of the Wrexham University study, said: "Age verification on delivery is weak. Most couriers are working zero-hour contracts, they are in a rush, they just don't have the time to be bothered – and who can blame them?"

Although it is illegal to sell alcohol to under-18s online, the law is not clear on whether checks should happen at the time of internet purchase or at the point of delivery, or both.

Growing concerns that delivery platforms are flouting rules to protect children have prompted investigations in the US. In May, the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control found that third-party services were routinely delivering to underage drinkers. Australian research published this year found that 61% of users of on-demand alcohol services, including Uber Eats, were already intoxicated when they received their alcohol orders.

Referring to O'Connor's case, Uber Eats said: "Uber Eats takes this matter very seriously, and we are currently investigating these reports. Any alcohol delivery requires a courier to check the ID of the customer to confirm identity and age, and that they are not intoxicated. We regularly remind couriers of this, and any courier found not following the correct process risks losing access to the app."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "The government takes underage drinking very seriously and is committed to cracking down hard on criminal and irresponsible businesses that sell alcohol to children."

Lincoln, Omaha bars excited for Husker football to return

Written by DeLaun Dillard

LINCOLN, Neb. — Wednesday's Big Ten announcement ignited excitement in many people, from Husker football fans to bar owners still recovering from COVID-19.

"These businesses really rely on Husker football, they really count on these Saturdays in the fall," said Lincoln bar owner Chris Gorman.

"At least we can get some activity back downtown," added Chris Vaskek, co-owner of Captain Jack's. "I know we were all working hard for some events to be safe and socialize, just to help with our mental health, just to get some activity and bring business back to downtown."

Lincoln Railyard Commons is commonly known to be a popular spot on game day, and nearby bars are ready for fans.

"The Railyard isn't going to look like it has in past, just like the stadium is not gonna look like it has," Gorman explained. "We're going to have limits on capacity, some additional health measures in place. We're gonna be working with the city, police, and health to make sure we're creating a safe environment down here."

In Omaha, the Capitol District's management is thrilled to get back in the groove of things.

"I think this is great for the district, our bars, and restaurants, and Nebraska as a whole really," said marketing and events director Amanda Frank.

Frank said tables in the district are 8 feet apart, and there's plenty of room to social distance.

"Everyone knows that an outdoor venue is obviously safer in the pandemic than an indoor," said Frank. "With an awesome plaza and our tables being spaced 8 feet apart, it's the perfect place to watch the Husker games."

Expert column: How COVID-19 and alcohol use may compound each other

Written by Anita Cservenka

There is no doubt we are experiencing some of the greatest challenges we have ever faced in our lifetimes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a psychologist who has researched addiction for more than a decade, I am especially concerned about the virus's effects on substance use rates and the health disparities that are created and exacerbated by the pandemic. Recent studies suggest a multitude of ways that COVID-19 and alcohol use are intertwined, and I'd like to focus on four ways that the combination of the two creates an especially concerning situation.

First, several countries saw a jump in alcohol sales at the time of COVID-19 lockdown and multiple recent reports across the globe suggest that the stress and isolation tied to lockdowns, loss of employment, caring for children and family members at home, and lack of social interaction may significantly increase alcohol use rates. For example, early data suggests that women may be particularly vulnerable to distress-induced alcohol use, while another study found that just one week after lockdown, alcohol consumption increased among college students at one Midwestern university. Since we know that alcohol affects multiple organ systems and that hazardous drinking increases risk for traffic accidents, unsafe sex, and alcohol use disorder, it's more critical than ever for public health officials to educate their communities about the negative consequences of excessive drinking.

Second, a recent publication suggests that alcohol use may actually increase risk for contracting COVID-19, as heavy alcohol users' lungs are more susceptible to viral infection. Thus, individuals diagnosed with an alcohol use disorder may be disproportionately infected and impacted by the virus. This leads me to a third area of concern, which is that individuals with an alcohol use disorder who acquire COVID-19 may be more likely to experience complications from the virus due to the combined effect of both alcohol and viral infection on organ functioning. Furthermore, COVID-19 poses an additional risk to patients with alcohol use disorder who already have multiple co-occurring health conditions and are thus immunocompromised.

Finally, one of the most significant ways COVID-19 is positioned to create and exacerbate health disparities is by reducing access to treatment for individuals with an alcohol use disorder. Both medication-based and therapy-based treatment, including support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, may become challenging to access during coronavirus-induced shutdowns.

According to providers at two Central Oregon addiction treatment and counseling facilities, the pandemic is already impacting patients with alcohol use disorder in the region.

Prof. Kathy Biles, who teaches in OSU-Cascades' counseling program, spoke with directors Karen Ludwig from New Priorities and Monika Castaneda from Best Care, who said counselors and recovery mentors are working hard to stay connected with clients via phone calls and Zoom meetings.

"While outpatient and individual counseling programs changed to telehealth, support meetings, such as AA, have had to close their meeting doors, or go online," Biles said. "Looking at the

listings for twelve-step and other support meetings, only about one-quarter of the daily meetings are taking place online via Zoom.”

Cancellation of meetings or lack of available technology to attend online meetings has left many patients without access to physicians, counselors, and support groups, which can increase the likelihood of relapse to alcohol use, especially when the stress of the pandemic may further heighten vulnerability for using alcohol as a coping mechanism.

It is clear that the multifold effects of COVID-19 on alcohol use, health disparities, and treatment access are complex and deserve heightened attention due to the increased risk for negative health outcomes during the pandemic. The public must be informed of the long-term impacts of hazardous drinking on individual and community health, and treatment providers should be supported in the critical work they do to maintain care for clients when faced with increasingly complex challenges.

1998 to 2016 Saw Rise in Alcohol Use Disorder Hospitalizations

Written by Unknown

TUESDAY, Sept. 22, 2020 (HealthDay News) — Alcohol use disorder (AUD) hospitalizations increased from 1998 to 2016, while in-hospital mortality for patients hospitalized with AUD decreased, according to a research letter published online Sept. 21 in JAMA Network Open.

Jasvinder A. Singh, M.B.B.S., M.P.H., and John D. Cleveland, from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, conducted a cross-sectional examination using data from the U.S. National Inpatient Sample (NIS) database from 1998 to 2016 to examine trends in AUD hospitalizations and associated in-hospital mortality.

Data were included for 5,590,952 patients with primary AUD hospitalizations; 1.9 percent died during hospitalization. The researchers observed a 3.5 percent increase in AUD hospitalizations, from 274,652 in 1998 to 284,275 in 2016; claims decreased until 2005 and then increased to 2015. Per 100,000 total NIS claims, there were decreases of 25 and 28 percent in the number of AUD hospitalization deaths and mortality rate, respectively. From 1998 to 2016, there was a decrease in in-hospital mortality for AUD hospitalizations by 25 percent compared with a 20 percent decrease for all other NIS claims.

“From 1998 to 2016 in the U.S., AUD hospitalizations increased slightly while in-hospital mortality for patients hospitalized with AUD decreased significantly,” the authors write. “A better understanding of what causes these time trends could help further improve AUD hospitalization outcomes and reduce mortality.”

One author disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical and other industries.

Commentary: Increase in alcohol tax could help address state's health inequities

Written by Antonio Hayes, Erek Barron, Jazz Lewis

For years our health care system has failed some Maryland communities, especially people of color.

In Baltimore City, for example, life expectancy is roughly 20 years less for people in certain West Baltimore ZIP codes compared to those living just a few miles away in more affluent, white areas, while rates of chronic disease and infant mortality are significantly higher for people of color. In Prince George's County, there was nearly a 16 year difference in life expectancies, with a concentration of poorer outcomes mostly in communities within the Beltway. For example, the life expectancy of predominantly African American Suitland is 70 years, compared to 86 years in predominantly white Greenbelt.

The COVID-19 pandemic is another tragic marker. The disease has disproportionately affected people of color with higher rates of infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

Many factors have contributed to this, but one of the underlying causes is that many Maryland communities lack the health care resources they need, leading to stark health disparities.

Our response is major new legislation to provide needed health care resources to Maryland communities that urgently need more services and better access to health care providers.

This initiative, known as Health Equity Resource Communities (HERC), offers a targeted way to make sure support is reaching the areas that need it the most. Eligible communities will compete to be part of the HERC initiative by proposing ways to address the health needs of their underserved residents. Those selected will receive new grants and tax incentives to expand care. Health care providers working in those areas could become eligible to have their educational loans repaid — creating a valuable incentive for providers to practice in these communities.

Over time, this initiative will pump major new funds into these previously underinvested communities, with health care providers making sure all resources are spent effectively.

Our goal is to wipe out the persistent health care disparities across the state, which harm people of color, people living in low-income neighborhoods and people in rural areas.

The HERC program is modeled after the successful Health Enterprise Zones (HEZ) Program which operated from 2012 to 2016 in Maryland and increased access to health resources, improved residents' health, reduced hospital admissions, and created cost savings in selected areas of the state, according to a study by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

We have identified an appropriate funding source for the HERC initiative — a one cent per dollar increase in the state alcohol beverage sales tax. This would be the first increase in the alcohol tax since 2011, and it would bring Maryland's tax up to that of the District of Columbia next door to Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

This is the right revenue source for a health care initiative. We know from the state's experience over the past decade that increasing the alcohol tax not only generates revenues but also saves

lives and leads to improved health outcomes, including a reduction in underage drinking, binge drinking, driving under the influence and sexually transmitted infections.

Under our legislation, some of the proceeds from the alcohol tax increase will also go to expand mental health and substance use disorder treatment programs — which are critically underfunded today.

A recent poll found that Marylanders overwhelming support the HERC concept.

We are proud to partner with a range of organizations to work to pass the HERC measure. Advocacy is being led by the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative, which has been on the front lines of health care reform for more than two decades. This year, MCHI has brought together well over 100 community, labor, business and faith groups from across the state to endorse our legislation. We are counting on having their voices heard in the General Assembly session early next year.

While Maryland has one of the best health care delivery systems in the nation, if not the world, the COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that it is nonetheless failing many Marylanders. Too many people of color, low-income people and rural residents face an inadequate and discriminatory health care system that does not effectively meet their health needs. The past few months of protests over racial injustice have made clear that people in Maryland and across the nation expect our elected leaders to act aggressively to create a fair and responsive health care system for everyone, no matter which community they live in.

The HERC plan is a critical step toward a fairer and healthier future for our state.

State Sen. Antonio Hayes (antonio.hayes@senate.state.md.us) represents the 40th District in Baltimore City. Dels. Erek L. Barron (erek.barron@house.state.md.us) and Jazz Lewis (jazz.lewis@house.state.md.us) represent the 24th District in Prince George's County.

Council approves move to space Lincoln bars out into street: 'This is worth the experiment'

Written by Riley Johnson

Husker football fans might be kept out of the stadium this season, but they may have a spot on city streets.

Lincoln City Council members unanimously approved temporary ordinances to allow bars to expand into the sidewalk and street to accommodate increased drinkers watching home Husker football games.

The ordinances allow for special designated licenses and special event permits for Lincoln bars to be granted on days of Nebraska home games this season, as long as fans are prohibited from attending games.

City officials believe the measure will allow authorized bars to safely expand their serving capacity while not crowding Husker game watchers indoors.

Assistant City Attorney Tonya Peters told the council Eighth Street between P and R streets could be one of the first streets closed for the temporary expansion on Halloween, when Nebraska hosts Wisconsin.

Canopy Street directly adjacent to the Railyard is already closed through Halloween as part of the city's current Dine Out program, and the Railyard is expected to seek an extension, Peters said.

Joel Schossow, who owns McKinney's Irish Pub and Topsy Tina's Taco Cantina in the Haymarket, has already applied for the new permits for all four home games.

He was the lone person to testify at Monday's meeting.

If approved, the permits could help his businesses handle the likely influx of Husker fans wanting to get together to cheer on the team, he said.

But he would ensure an expansion of his bar into the sidewalk and street would have tables and chairs for everyone, he said.

"It's not just going to be a free-for-all," Schossow told council members.

To ensure the ordinances take effect in time, the council suspended its rules, held a public hearing and then adopted the ordinances on two 6-0 votes. Councilman Roy Christensen wasn't at Monday's meeting.

"Anything we can do to help businesses, I think this is worth this experiment," Councilwoman Sandra Washington said.

Council members would control what special permits are granted after holding public hearings at their regular meetings, and the City Clerk can revoke a permit if a coronavirus outbreak or late-breaking concerns emerge.