

**Appointment, Harry Hoch  
General Affairs Committee  
Testimony of Chris Wagner  
Project Extra Mile  
March 4, 2019**

Good afternoon Chairman Briese and members of the committee, my name is Chris Wagner. I'm the executive director of Project Extra Mile, a statewide non-profit working to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms through evidence-based policies. We are here today to express our opposition to Mr. Hoch's appointment to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.

I want to start by stating that our opposition is not based on the character of Mr. Hoch. Instead, our opposition is based on the principle that the alcohol industry should not be in a position to regulate itself.

This is particularly true in our state, which experiences a lot of problems due to excessive alcohol consumption. As I've already shared numerous times with this committee, we have the dubious honor of being the 5<sup>th</sup> worst binge drinking state in the country with 20.6 percent of our population currently binge drinking (CDC, 2017). We're the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst DUI state in the country with 955 episodes of self-reported alcohol-impaired driving per 1,000 population (Jewell et al., 2015). With an estimated population of 1.9 million, that equates to 1.83 million DUI episodes.

In 2015, our state had an estimated 703 alcohol-attributable deaths and 2,403 hospitalizations due to alcohol. We also have an estimated annual cost of \$1.16 billion in work productivity lost, increased healthcare and increased law enforcement costs (Sacks et al., 2015). Furthermore, between 2008 and 2017 our state had 721 alcohol-related traffic fatalities (NDOT-HSO, 2018).

With these realities, we truly need public health and safety voices at the commission – not former executives who spent their lifetime in the alcohol industry. Mr. Hoch compared the regulation of alcohol to that of podiatry and other goods and services. Podiatrists and their products don't kill 703 Nebraskans per year. So that's a very misleading comparison. At best, allowing the industry to regulate itself will maintain the status quo and, at worst, exacerbate these problems.

We also have questions as to whether Mr. Hoch is eligible to serve as a commissioner under Section 53-110(3)(a), and we would urge this committee to thoroughly review whether Mr. Hoch as an individual or as a shareholder currently has any interest whatsoever in the manufacture, sale, or distribution of alcoholic liquor. These are very broad restrictions that could easily disqualify Mr. Hoch depending on the nature of his personal investments and/or any retirement compensation he may have received.

For these reasons, we feel that this appointment to the Liquor Control Commission is ill-advised and bad public policy considering the challenges our state faces. We would urge the committee to vote against this appointment.