



Position Paper – August 2010

RE: Social Host Ordinances

Introduction:

According to current research, social host policies are among the most effective forms of public policy in reducing youth binge drinking and drinking and driving.¹ Social host ordinances (SHO) address the environment of highest risk for youth binge drinking: *private parties*, by holding non-commercial party hosts responsible for underage drinking events that occur on their property.² SHO gives law enforcement a new and effective tool and serves as a significant deterrent to adults hosting underage drinking parties in the first place, by allowing first responders to recover service costs from the offender and imposing escalating fines for repeat offenders. SHO compliment the current state law prohibiting ‘furnishing of alcohol to minors’ by adding a new local law prohibiting ‘furnishing of the place’ where underage drinking occurs.

Position:

Cobb Alcohol Taskforce supports:

- Local public safety officials’ use of innovative tools to help reduce illegal and un-safe drinking
- Adoption and implementation of social host ordinances by County and City Governments
- Consistent, fair and equitable adjudication of all cases involving youth and alcohol

Objective:

Adoption and implementation of social host ordinances by local Cobb County governments;

- Addressing current evidence collection challenge for determining who furnished alcohol when police arrive at a party where underage youth are drinking alcohol
- Sending a clear message to adults that allowing underage drinking to occur on property they control is unacceptable

Community Support:

- 96% of Americans support public policies to prevent underage drinking³
- GA PTA passed a resolution to support social host laws at annual meeting⁴
- 93% of Cobb citizens “agree” that laws prohibiting adults from providing alcohol to minors should be strictly enforced⁵
- 59% of Cobb citizens “agree” that consequences for adults who provide alcohol to minors are weak and inconsistent, and 28% “don’t know”⁵
- NAS/IOM report to the U.S. Congress: “Local police, working with community leaders, should adopt and announce polices for detecting and terminating underage drinking parties”⁶
- As of January 2009, 24 states had adopted social host criminal liability statues, and hundreds of local communities in 21 states had passed social host or teen party ordinances²

1 Stout, E.M., Sloan, F.A., Liang, L. & Davies, H.H. (2000) “Reducing harmful alcohol-related behaviors: Effective regulatory methods” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*

2 Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS), <http://alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/> (2009) *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health*

3 Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (June 2007) *Prevention Science Publication*

4 Georgia PTA (July 2009) *Resolution to support social host laws*

5 Cobb Alcohol Taskforce Survey (July 2009)

6 “Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility” (2003) Report to Congress, *National Academies of Science Institute of Medicine*