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House Commerce and Economic Development Committee

Testimony regarding HB 2206

Chairman Kleeb and Members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in opposition to HB 2206.

I am here to speak to you today as a consumer and a local business owner. I am a State Farm agent who has lived and worked in the Olathe area for over twenty years.

The proposal to sell wine and stronger beer in grocery stores, convenience stores, and mega-stores is not something I can support. There has been a great deal of marketing put into the public relations message promoting convenience, but convenience is not the only issue to consider.

First of all, in this economy, Kansas needs its small businesses and the jobs they provide. As much as I welcome the big businesses and the big retailers to our area, we need the small businesses to provide the purchasing power, the leasing, the buying of insurance, hiring accountants, employment, and spending their profits in our community. There is a quoted study that indicates that locally owned businesses spend 3 times more of their income in their immediate area in comparison to the chain stores. Strong and vital communities need their unique, small local businesses to grow and flourish. We have done enough to encourage the expansion of the big box stores – even helping them build their stores and tax increment financing.

I enjoy entertaining and do buy wine, beer, and liquor, but I don't think that there is any need to have these products sold as if they were no different than cookies or cereal. I count on the expertise I receive in choosing wines at my local liquor store and would not enjoy the same guidance or care at the other locations. Additionally, there is no need to have underage kids selling it and facing the temptation to sell or to give it to their friends. Why open up the liquor sales to another 2-3000 locations? How will it be possible to monitor minor liquor sales at so many locations! Drinking and driving is still a very serious issue among teenagers. Why elevate the opportunity for their consumption? Fortunately, I don't see children when I go into my neighborhood liquor store, but I do see children in every grocery store, convenience store, and mega-store. I certainly don't take my Grandson into the liquor store, but do venture into the grocery store, convenience store or discount store with him on occasion.

It is likely that there will be people who will see the "Uncork Kansas" logo and think "What the heck!" Why not? But after careful thought one should realize there are *many* reasons why not. Over the past 10 years, I have worked to become a more educated consumer and a smarter voter. I am active in my community and talk to people about the latest news that affects our community. I feel confident in saying that there may be people who think the idea sounds great – but will it be a reason to vote? I don't think so. Please focus on strengthening our business and local jobs and avoid policies that are certain to do more harm than good. There are truly important policy issues to consider – and expanding liquor sales at the expense of Kansas businesses or the safety of our children isn't one of them.

I enjoy an occasional glass of Malbec. I am happy to continue to buy it in a locally owned business because it is better for our community and ultimately, it's better for me, my family, and my business too.