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TO: David A. Hart, Chairperson
Alcohol License Review Committee

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TOPIC: Alcohol License Density Ordinance

As a resident of Madison for 18 years and someone who works as a public health nurse and is a member of the Dane County Coalition to Reduce Alcohol Abuse, I encourage you to be proactive in your support of not only continuing the Downtown Madison Alcohol License Density Ordinance as it was originally designed, but also voting to make it permanent. Effective public policy at the local level is essential to create and sustain change in the environment itself. Efforts directed at changing individual behavior alone are insufficient without effective policy strategies in place. Thus, it is important to have both ALDO and standards for owners and operators of licensed alcohol-selling and serving establishments.

Alcohol is a legal substance and many enjoy alcohol without danger of alcohol abuse or addiction. But it is also true that the use and abuse of alcohol by underage drinkers and binge drinking by youth and adults are significant problems in Madison, Dane County and Wisconsin – to the extent that Wisconsin is identified as:

- The 15th drunkest state (Madison was just ranked the 15th drunkest city in America, based on alcohol-related liver disease, DUI related arrests and deaths and binge drinking, according to *Men's Health Magazine*.);
- #1 in bars per capita;
- #1 in binge drinking; and,
- Alcohol is the #1 teen problem

Yet as I attended the many meetings of the ALDO subcommittee I have been impressed by the absolute lack of concern expressed or desire to engage in developing and sustaining science-based strategies to prevent and reduce binge drinking and alcohol abuse by the members of the business community representing the Business Improvement District (BID) at these meetings. Instead the emphasis seems to always be on the need for alcohol to somehow assure success of a business and its profits. In addition, no data have been submitted by the BID representatives to my knowledge that justify the compromises now being discussed by the subcommittee to change ALDO related to the 365 day provision and exceptional circumstances provision.

The people I know and work with want a community that encourages healthy, responsible choices, not one that promotes over-consumption. We have so many smart, caring people and organizations in Madison and Dane County who work to make Madison a safe,

healthy and fun place. It seems reasonable that most people who live, work and/or play in Madison would want to and could minimize alcohol-related crime, violence and burden to health and safety, a source of major economic costs to our community and state, while at the same time working together to build and sustain thriving businesses.

As you discuss ALDO, I ask that you consider the following:

ALDO was created to reduce the number of alcohol licenses in the downtown area because of the unacceptably high amount of violence in the area. Research shows a strong correlation between violence and the number of liquor licenses.

- **365 days Provision:** 365 days is a reasonable amount of time to find a new tenant in a competitive real estate area. To date the BID has not been able to satisfactorily make a case regarding the significance by any measure of 1-3 properties remaining vacant beyond 365 days.
 - If this provision is then doubled to 730 days, doubling the window of time for allowing a new tavern to open does not :
 - limit the number of alcohol outlets
 - do what ALDO was set out to accomplish
 - If an establishment closes and new tenants are not found within 365 days, City leaders should seize that opportunity to reduce liquor outlets in the downtown area while working to attract and support development of other kinds of desirable businesses.
- **Exceptional Circumstances:** The exceptional circumstance clause should remain as it is in the existing ordinance with no more than a 25% liquor sales allowed for non-bar establishments.
 - Raising the limit allowed for total alcohol sales from 25% to 50% or higher does not work to reduce alcohol outlet density downtown.
 - Half of a business' revenue does not need to come from alcohol in order for the business to be successful.
 - If an outlet gets more than 50% of its revenue from alcohol, it should be viewed as a bar and not as a restaurant or entertainment venue.

Let's remember what ALDO was set up to do and stick to it. Evaluation of it is important and must be done. Changing ALDO or ending it without adequate time to do valid and reliable evaluation is unwarranted at this time. There even seems to be potential for future expansion of ALDO to other areas of Madison and in Dane County.

Our community will not thrive if we fail to address the very real issue of alcohol abuse in Madison. I believe that ALDO is a significant strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol abuse in Madison and hope that I may count on your support to not only continue ALDO but also make it permanent.