

Members of the ALRC:

As a member of this committee I am greatly concerned with the lack of entertainment options available to those between the ages of 18 and 20. With a campus so heavily integrated with the community, I find it detrimental that this age group is excluded from most nighttime entertainment options in Madison. The survey results I sent out to the student body in late October echo this concern; 91% of the nearly 2,500 respondents believe that nighttime entertainment in Madison is targeted at those 21 and older.

In attempting to address this issue, I have met and worked closely with many members of the community, some of who sit on this committee. This includes, but is not limited to, students, downtown area aldermen, Captain Gloede of the Madison Police Department, current business owners who possess an 18+ entertainment license, and Alcohol Policy Coordinator Mark Woulf.

What I have gathered from these meetings has been very positive. Everyone I met with agrees that this is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The community is interested in the topic and is willing to work on improving the situation. Also, in my conversation with current 18+ license holders, I have learned that this type of entertainment is achievable and profitable.

However, there are serious barriers that could hinder the success of this campaign. One of which is the support of the community. If increasing the number of 18+ venues downtown is to be victorious, city officials and the community need to work together and support those businesses interested in pursuing an 18+ license. Another major obstacle is the law itself. The only legal way for an applicant to obtain an 18+ license is if they have a specific event directed for this age group; so there must be some form of entertainment, some purpose for the patrons to be there. This is very crippling to the campaign because the city lacks in entertainment in general, resulting in a lack of venues that are able to adapt to an 18+ format.

My suggested approach to lack of entertainment options available to those 18-20 is to focus on expanding the entertainment options in Madison in general. I believe that if the city's overall entertainment options expand, so will 18+.

This is not only a student issue but also a Madison issue. I do not want to increase entertainment that is only targeted to students, but rather diversify all entertainment for all demographics and interests in Madison. I see downtown Madison, especially the remote State Street area, becoming the center of Madison's entertainment. I see those who live in the Madison suburbs venturing downtown at night to participate in the activities. I also see the UW-student body as a crucial participant too, given that the UW-campus and State Street are already so intertwined.

I understand that throughout the course of this letter I have not yet defined exactly what entertainment is, and I have done that on purpose. I do not want to put a binding definition on it. I do not want to solely increase the number of concerts in Madison or solely increase the number of dance clubs-I want to increase everything. I see this project as a city project, therefore I include all members in my vision, and thereby all interests, in the city. Nothing is off limits when it comes to the idea of entertainment.

However, I will also make some suggestions as to possible forms of entertainment I think would be most beneficial. One first recommendation is to create a local band scene. Many other cities have this and it is very popular. Starting local will give Madison a chance to showcase the talent we have here at home as well as help promote live music entertainment. Another idea is to establish, or rather bring back, a movie theater to the campus area. A movie theater would accommodate not only students, but also families visiting downtown. Finally, I think it that would be valuable would be to diversify the types of establishments open at night. Currently, the only things open late at night are bars. Having other businesses open later, such as stores or coffee shops, would welcome other interests and reduce drinking.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this and welcome all thoughts on the matter. This is an issue that is personally important to me, as well as students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I look forward to hearing your opinions and working with you to

address this issue. Madison is a city rich in many things, however currently entertainment is not one of them.

Sincerely,

Rachel Lepak
rdlepak@wisc.edu
262-716-4533