



## CHRISTIAN ACTION LEAGUE OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.

6325 FALLS OF NEUSE ROAD, STE 35-106, RALEIGH, NC 27615

Office phone: (919) 787-0606

Email: [office@christianactionleague.org](mailto:office@christianactionleague.org) • Website: [www.christianactionleague.org](http://www.christianactionleague.org)

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Dr. Mark Creech, Executive Director  
Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.  
6325 Falls of Neuse Road  
Suite 35-106  
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27615

Governor Cooper,

*[The first sections of this letter to Gov. Cooper are of a personal nature and have been redacted for that reason. The remainder of the letter pertains to concerns regarding HB 389.]*

I would like to draw your attention to a legislative initiative that recently passed the North Carolina General Assembly, **HB 389 - ABC Univ Athletic Facility**.

I believe that it was Craig Bruce who said, "Nothing surpasses the beauty and elegance of a bad idea." HB 389 has been made to seem good for our state colleges and universities, but it is a horrible idea.

The measure would allow trustee boards within the University of North Carolina system to decide whether to sell beer and wine at their stadiums and athletic facilities during collegiate sporting events.

It's probably unnecessary to belabor the many ways alcohol abuse among college students poses significant health and safety threats to them. But allow me to mention a few.

Alcohol abuse among college students is contributing to nearly 2000 of them dying every year from an alcohol-related unintentional injury or a motor vehicle crash. Nearly 700,000 college students are assaulted every year by another student who has been drinking. Every year, nearly 100,000 students report experiencing alcohol-related assault or date rape. About 1 in 4 college students have serious academic problems because of their drinking.

Proponents of this "bad idea" have erroneously cited data that they claim proves when stadium-wide alcohol sales are allowed, alcohol-related game day offenses drop. This

data, however, is anecdotal at best and is not the result of “scientific evaluation” or “peer reviewed” studies.

The declines mentioned at colleges such as the University of West Virginia, University of Minnesota, Ohio University, etc., may be attributed to other factors such as a greater police presence on game days. There is essentially no reliable evidence to suggest allowing beer and wine sales at college football or basketball games will reduce the binge drinking associated with these events. To make such a claim is absurd! It violates the most fundamental findings of alcohol research over several decades.

Nonetheless, there is reliable evidence which concludes making alcohol more available among a population that already drinks heavily, and a substantial portion of which is already in need of some clinical intervention around their drinking will undoubtedly exacerbate rather than alleviate excessive drinking and its related harms.

We can debate the data given in defense of this bill. Nevertheless, the principle is a simple one. If I come home to find that I left the faucet to my bathtub open and the water has spilled over the tub and onto the floors everywhere, ruining them, should I go over to the sink and open another faucet and argue that will help me get control?

If this bill advocated ending the practice of tailgating while restricting all beer and wine sales with higher prices to inside the stadium, that might be a step in the right direction. But it doesn't. By every standard of scientific peer-reviewed alcohol research and by every standard of common sense, this bill fails to do anything except serve the interest of the state universities who have yet to prove that they can even make a dent in college binge drinking.

Only a few years ago, the Christian Action League worked closely with Democrats and advocacy groups to successfully ban cigarette smoking in restaurants and other venues for the sake of people who choose not to smoke. As a state, we said that we had far too long overlooked these people as stakeholders.

Today I implore you on behalf of the forgotten stakeholders of HB 389 – the parents who send their children to one of our state's universities but know nothing about this legislation and would likely disapprove – the families who have been given no assurances from the language of this bill that there will be seating for them at a collegiate sporting event where they won't have to deal with a drunken fan – the students who don't drink but lose sleep or find it difficult to study because of their fellow students' binge drinking – those living adjoining to college campuses, who suffer everything from serious litter problems to violence because of college campus drinking. These are some of the many people who do not choose alcohol or abuse it but would still have to live with the negative consequences of this legislation.

I am relatively certain you will not find any public health and safety experts in our state who would agree that HB 389 is good alcohol policy.

In a recent op-ed in the *Raleigh News and Observer*, Sarah Potter, executive director of the *Addiction Professionals of North Carolina* and previously the Chief of

*Community Wellness, Prevention, and Health Integration for the North Carolina Division of Mental Health*, referenced this same legislation, which was also a provision in an Omnibus Alcohol measure, HB 536.

Potter wrote: “These proposals are anything but balanced. They fly in the face of rational thought when the evidence is so clear and obvious to the contrary. We don’t have to wonder what policies work to prevent alcohol harm. The evidence has been exhaustively studied. We do, however, need the courage to keep them intact. We’re counting on reasonable minds prevailing for all North Carolinians in defeating these bills.” [2]

At this point, Governor, with this particular bill on your desk, you are the last hope for rational thought, and reasonable minds prevailing.

There comes a time when courage is needed to say, “No,” to those who are more concerned with profits than with principle or the facts. There is too much at risk here for North Carolina’s college and university students.

On behalf of the Board of the Christian Action League and the more than 4000 churches within our network, I beseech you to veto this legislation.

This is a “bad idea” that has been made to look beautiful and elegant by proponents, but it should not be codified into North Carolina law.

Thank you for your consideration.

[1] <https://okcfox.com/news/local/ou-approves-alcohol-sales-at-sporting-events>

[2] <https://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/article230073449.html#storylink=cpy>

God Bless,



Rev. Mark Creech  
Executive Director  
Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.