

Bill Would Limit Teen Targeted Alcohol

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On Wednesday, NC House Majority Leader Edgar Starnes of Caldwell County introduced a bill with wide bi-partisan support that would limit the availability of a category of high risk alcoholic drinks. Dylan Mulrooney-Jones, with the North Carolina Alcohol Policy Alliance said, "These products pose serious risk to the health and safety of North Carolina's children," and said, "we applaud the Republican leadership for putting children first." Flavored alcoholic beverages like Four Loko, Joose and Blast often contain 12 percent alcohol by volume in 24 ounce cans-- the definition of binge drinking in one, non-resealable container. These products, which contain spirituous flavorings and sugar are reported to taste more like a soda pop than beer and are heavily marketed toward and highly attractive to young people. Reverend Creech with the Christian Action League said, "Since legislation was passed in 2006 increasing the amount of alcohol that products marketed as malt beverages can contain (from 6%-15%), there has been an influx of Flavored Alcohol Beverages (FABs) popular among youth." Wanda Boone, with Durham Together for Resilient Youth (T.R.Y), said existing flavored alcohol beverages are more popular than beer among teenage girls and represent over 16% of the youth alcohol market. Among youth who report regular alcohol consumption (defined as at least one drinking episode in the past 30 days), almost two thirds (64%) report regular use of FABs. She said "These products are highly attractive to youth consumers." And she said, "Additionally, they put our low wealth communities in great harm. These communities that already have high concentrations of alcohol outlets (convenience stores), increased rates of crime and chronic disease, do not need these dangerous alcoholic products on every street corner, worsening the myriad problems that exist." House Bill 782 would move these high alcohol content, sugary, flavored beverages to ABC stores. "North Carolina's ABC Boards are one of our best lines of defense between potentially harmful alcoholic products and youthful consumers. I cannot think of a better place to house these drinks to protect our children" said Mulrooney-Jones.