



# ROB SUMMERFIELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 67<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

April 11, 2017

Senator Moulton, Chair

Senator Tiffany, Vice-Chair

Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business & Tourism

## **Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 153**

*Relating to the prohibition against underage persons being present on alcohol licensed premises*

Submitted by: Representative Rob Summerfield

Dear Chair Moulton, Vice-Chair Tiffany, and Committee Members:

I am writing to offer my support for 2017 Senate Bill 153 relating to the prohibition against underage persons being present on alcohol licensed premises. I appreciate your time and consideration of this important legislation.

When you think of summer in Wisconsin, undoubtedly you will think of one of the many large music festivals held around the state. Whether it be Country USA in Oshkosh, Rock Fest in Cadott, or the Blue Ox Music Festival in Eau Claire, Wisconsin has something for every music taste. We are all aware of the immense popularity of these large music festivals, as well as the economic boost they provide to our state. For example, large music festivals in Eau Claire alone bring in an estimated \$40 million; accounting for over 10% of yearly visitor spending in the Chippewa Valley. Area restaurants, hotels, stores, and other businesses rely heavily on the estimated 100,000 visitors that come to these large music festivals; not to mention the numerous additional visitors and revenue generated from other large area music festivals.

Unfortunately, it has recently come to light that, due to a technical provision in Wisconsin law, many of these economically essential and exceedingly popular music festivals have been operating illegally. Under Wisconsin Statute 125.07, large music festival venues are not exempted from the federal minimum drinking age of 21. Therefore, unaccompanied minors (those under 21 years old) may not be on premises licensed for the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. This presents a real dilemma for large music festivals. The responsible use of alcoholic beverages is a necessity from both the viewpoint of the music festivals and their patrons; however, so is the attendance of young adults, especially those in the 18-20 year old range.

Fortunately, however, Wisconsin Statute 125.07 (3) (a) allows for exemptions to the federal minimum drinking age. Some current exemptions include: hotels; grocery stores; bowling alleys; movie theaters; stadiums; state fair park; public facilities (arenas, coliseums, related exposition facilities or centers for the performing or visual arts) which are owned by a county or municipality; and the Eagle Ridge Festival Grounds in the city of Chippewa Falls. This bill would add an exemption for music festival venues during an event with a projected attendance of at least 2,500 persons.

In short, Senate Bill 153 would keep the status quo of large music festival operations. Without this exemption, large music festival venues would be forced to choose between continuing to legally sell alcoholic beverages on their premises but not allowing anyone under 21 to be on those premises unaccompanied, or discontinuing the legal sale of alcoholic beverages so all ages may be present. Either option would result in a significant amount of lost revenue for both the large music festivals themselves and the surrounding areas that benefit from these large music festivals. However, by providing an exemption, this difficult and economically unviable situation would be eliminated.

Given that summer is fast approaching, there is no more appropriate time for this legislation to be introduced. In order for Wisconsin's large music festivals to continue to operate as they have for decades, it is imperative that the legislature address this technical fix today.