Dear Chairman Delauro, Ranking Member Granger and Representatives Quigley and Womack:

The undersigned organizations urge the United States Congress to ensure that the estimated 69.5 percent of U.S. adults who drink alcoholic beverages¹ – more than 170 million people² – have access to mandatory standardized alcohol labeling on all beer, wine and distilled spirits products, addressing a gap that has hampered consumers from making informed drinking decisions.

Consumer, public health, medical and nutrition organizations have been pressing for comprehensive alcohol labeling for almost two decades. In fact, in 2003, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and the National Consumers League (NCL) first petitioned the lead federal agency that regulates beer, wine and distilled spirits – the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) within the Treasury Department – to require an easy-to-read, standardized “Alcohol Facts” label on all beer, wine and distilled spirits products.³

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Specifically, the petition called for a label format similar to the popular "Nutrition Facts" panel on foods and nonalcoholic beverages. As such, the label would list such basic information as the serving size, amount of alcohol and calories per serving, the percent alcohol by volume, the number of standard drinks per container, an ingredients list, and other needed information to make responsible drinking decisions.

Polling by the Beer Institute, a trade association, shows that 75 percent of Americans think alcoholic beverages should have standardized alcohol content labels and 72 percent say this labeling will encourage responsible alcohol use. And yet, TTB has forestalled action on mandatory labeling, despite having the statutory authority to do so under the Federal Alcohol Administration Act (FAA). TTB’s solution is a voluntary rule that allows companies to put nutrition and calorie information on their products if they so choose. The problem is many manufacturers have opted out, meaning many products remain unlabeled. Moreover, under TTB’s rule there is no standard format for where and how nutritional disclosures appear, making it hard to for consumers to find information easily and compare different brands.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) also has authority over the labeling of some alcoholic beverage products, notably hard ciders, wine coolers, other wines containing less than 7 percent alcohol by volume and beers not made from malted barley or hops. On these alcoholic beverages, FDA requires the same Nutrition Facts panel and ingredients statements as what appears on nonalcoholic beverages, from soft drinks to juices, and alcohol companies comply. Thus, there is proof that manufacturers have the capability to put a standardized “Alcohol Facts” label on other beer, wine and distilled spirits products – many just prefer not to.

Enhanced transparency in alcohol labeling is a critical measure for addressing excess alcohol consumption, a costly public health problem that increases the risk for alcohol- and diet-related diseases and serious injury. Alcohol is a source of empty calories that contribute to obesity, and can impact blood sugar control in people with diabetes. Additionally, alcohol is a roadway killer accounting for about 30 percent of all traffic crash fatalities in the U.S., and excessive drinking increases the risk of liver disease, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, alcohol use disorders, certain cancers and severe injuries. Even alcohol use consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans increases the risk

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of breast, colorectal, head and neck, and esophageal cancers,\textsuperscript{10} some of the leading cancer types.

Consequently, an estimated 140,000 people in the United States die annually from alcohol-related causes,\textsuperscript{11} which is why the cost of excessive alcohol use reached $249 billion in 2010 and is likely higher today. \textsuperscript{12}

Also, unlike other foods and beverages, beer, wine and distilled spirits are not required to declare the presence of major allergens, which may be used as processing agents or as ingredients.\textsuperscript{13,14,15} The disclosure of allergen information is a life-and-death matter for some consumers and the reason why the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (FALCPA) requires allergen labeling on all FDA-regulated foods and beverages. However, FALCPA does not apply to alcoholic beverages and even though a House committee report for the bill stated Congress’ intent that TTB develop allergen labeling requirements for beer, wine and distilled spirits,\textsuperscript{16} TTB has not finalized a mandatory rule.

For 19 years, the consumer, nutrition and public health communities have been pressing TTB to issue a final rule requiring standardized and complete alcohol labeling and it seems that public pressure alone is not enough to get TTB to act. Therefore, our organizations are turning to Congress to champion mandatory Alcohol Facts labeling as a priority for adult Americans. Access to this information is long overdue and will significantly advance important public health goals.

Sincerely,

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- Advocates for Better Children’s Diets
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
- Alcohol Justice
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American College of Preventive Medicine
- American Institute for Cancer Research
- Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Consumer Federation of America

• Consumer Reports
• Families USA
• Food Allergy Research and Education
• HealthyWomen
• Global Liver Institute
• National Alliance for Hispanic Health
• National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
• National Center for Health Research
• National Consumers League
• Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
• Public Good Law Center
• Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness
• The Obesity Society
• US Alcohol Policy Alliance
July 6, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman  Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations  Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128  Room S-128
The Capitol  The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Chair  Ranking Member
Financial Services and General Government  Financial Services and General Government
Subcommittee  Subcommittee
Room S-128, The Capitol  Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510

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Consumer, public health, medical and nutrition organizations have been pressing for comprehensive alcohol labeling for almost two decades. In fact, in 2003, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and the National Consumers League (NCL) first petitioned the lead federal agency that regulates beer, wine and distilled spirits – the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) within the Treasury Department – to require an easy-to-read, standardized “Alcohol Facts” label on all beer, wine and distilled spirits products.\(^3\)

Specifically, the petition called for a label format similar to the popular “Nutrition Facts” panel on foods and nonalcoholic beverages. As such, the label would list such basic information as the serving size, amount of alcohol and calories per serving, the percent

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\(^1\) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol Facts and Statistics. March 2022.  


\(^3\) Center for Science in the Public Interest. Petition to Improve Mandatory Label Information on Alcoholic Beverages. December 16, 2003.  
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