

OPEINING STATEMENT

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 06, 2007

**“PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF UNDERAGE PERSONS AMENDMENT ACT
OF 2007”**

TODAY I AM INTRODUCING THE “PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF UNDERAGE
PERSONS AMENDMENT ACT OF 2007”

THE FOLLOWING LIQUOR ESTABLISHMENTS MAY NOT UNDER THIS BILL
ADMIT PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 21:

1. NIGHTCLUBS, CN LICENSE

2. RESTAURANTS (CR) AND TAVERNS (CT) THAT:

FIRST, PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT AND

SECOND, WISH TO ADMIT PERSONS UNDER AGE 21 AFTER 11 PM

CONVERSELY IF A RESTAURANT OR TAVERN (1) DOES NOT PROVIDE
ENTERTAINMENT OR (2) PROVIDES ENTERTAINMENT BUT EXCLUDES
PERSONS UNDER 21, EXCEPT UNDER EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES OR IF
THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN, THEN THE BILL
WOULD HAVE NO APPLICATION.

HOWEVER, A NIGHTCLUB, RESTAURANT OR TAVERN MAY ADMIT
UNDERAGE PERSON FOR ENTERTAINMENT THE BAR PROVIDES, IF IT--

SUBMITS A PLAN ON SECURITY, UNDERAGE MONITORING AND OTHER MATERS

ABRA APPROVES THE PLAN AND THUS GIVES THE BUSINESS AN UNDERAGE ENTERTAINMENT PERMISSION

AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH OUR CHAIRMAN, AND OTHERS, I HAVE INSERTED IN THE PROPOSED BILL AN ADDITIONAL EXCEPTION FOR YOUTHS WHEN THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR A LEGAL GUARDIAN.

UNDER EXISTING DC LAW, THERE ARE--OTHER THAN THE PROHIBITIONS AGAINST THE SALE OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS--NO RESTRICTIONS OR GUIDELINES WHATSOEVER ON WHETHER A PERSON UNDER 21 CAN ENTER A BAR WHERE ALCOHOL IS SERVED.

MANY PEOPLE WERE ASTONISHED IN DC TO LEARN OF THIS FACT.

AS SUCH, THE 1919 9TH STREET/SMARTA BROADWAY CLUB SITUATION COULD EASILY REOCCUR.

A NIGHTCLUB LICENSEE--OR A TAVERN OR RESTAURANT LICENSEE WITH AN ENTERTAINMENT ENDORSEMENT--COULD TODAY ADMIT LEGALLY PERSONS OF ANY AGE INTO AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ADULTS WERE NOT ONLY DRINKING BUT WERE INTOXICATED.

WE KNOW WE GENERALLY HAVE SECURITY ISSUES IN BARS TODAY. A LARGE NUMBER OF BARS CANNOT SAFELY OPERATE IN THIS CITY TODAY WITHOUT METAL DETECTORS.

WHEN CHILDREN AND UNDERAGE PERSONS ARE ADMITTED TO THAT ENVIRONMENT, IT IS CAN BE A RECIPE FOR TRAGEDY SUCH AS WHAT HAPPENED WITH 17 YEAR OLD TALESHA FORD JUST TWO WEEKS AGO.

THE TALESHA FORD TRAGEDY WAS A RESULT OF VARIOUS CAUSES. SURELY THE FACT THAT THIS CITY SUFFERING FROM AN EPIDEMIC OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND IS AWASH IN ILLEGAL HANDGUNS ARE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS.

BUT SO TOO, IS THE FACT THAT THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LAW PERMITTED THIS ESTABLISHMENT TO OPERATE PRETTY MUCH AS IT PLEASED BECAUSE THERE WERE NO RESTRICTIONS IN PLACE ON WHAT A NIGHTCLUB HAD TO DO IN ORDER TO ADMIT PERSONS UNDER 21. THIS HAD EVERYTHING TO DO WITH A TOTAL LACK OF REQUIREMENTS ON UNDERAGE PERSONS IN NIGHTCLUBS IN DC. THAT ABSENCE DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTED, IN MY OPINION, TO HER DEATH. THE LAW UNWITTINGLY CREATED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT TO BE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED AT 1919 9TH STREET. THAT IS NOT TO SAY, THAT OTHER LICENSEES HAVE NOT BEEN RESPONSIBLE. BUT WE MUST ESTABLISH RULES ON SECURITY, TRAINING AND MONITORING UNDERAGE DRINKING IN A CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT THAT ADMITS UNDERAGE PERSONS.

HAD THIS BILL BEEN IN PLACE, THE OWNER OF THIS CLUB WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO SUBMIT FOR APPROVAL A PLAN DETAILING THE OPERATIONS OF AN UNDER AGE CLUB THAT SELLS ALCOHOL WHILE MINORS ARE PRESENT. COMPLIANCE WITH THAT PLAN WOULD HAVE BEEN MONITORED BY SPECIAL ABRA INSPECTORS.

MR CHAIRMAN, I THINK IT IS TIME TO CORRECT THIS OMISSION WITH RESPONSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON LIQUOR LICENSEES WHO SERVE ALCOHOL AND ALSO ADMIT CHILDREN AND MINORS.

AS THIS MEASURE GOES THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS, THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CHANGES. BUT WE NEED TO START NOW. I DID WANT TO DELAY ANOTHER DAY.

WE'RE TAKING KIDS OUT OF BARS EXCEPT UNDER VERY LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WE WILL CONTROL. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT SILENT MAJORITY WHO DOES NOT WANT THESE KIDS IN BARS. WE ARE GOING TO ESTABLISH RESPONSIBLE CONDITIONS WHERE THEY CAN COME IN.

I ASK MY COLLEAGUES TO CO SPONSOR THIS BILL SO THAT WE MAY BEGIN THE DISCUSSION ON HOW WE CAN KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND< IN FACT ALL OF OUR RESIDENTS AND GUESTS< SAFE AT OUR LICENSEE ESTABLISHMENTS.