



**RESTRICT MINORS.
NOT ADULTS.**

March 7, 2013

Lady and Gentlemen of the Commerce Committee,

Today I present to you the signatures of thousands of your Kansas constituents, each desiring that you vote in favor of HB 2206. Their names are here. And on these cards, the faces of many of your constituents. Each wants the same thing: choice in the marketplace.

I've traveled around the state talking to small grocers in both rural and urban areas. Most aren't here today as they're busy managing their stores, but they've submitted written testimony. Elaine, from Gove County, wonders how their community owned grocery store will stay afloat. She needed this law passed a decade ago. Elaine in Strong City speaks of her efforts over 25 years to feed the people in her county. Jeff of Colwich and Dante in Leavenworth are third generation owners working hard in a tough industry to honor their family legacies and feed their own children with dwindling grocery store profits.

Without question, each believes selling alcohol in their stores would increase their chance of survival.

Sell a legal product their customers want to purchase?

They've long been in favor. The only roadblock has been this government regulation that protects liquor stores, while doing nothing to support the needs of small grocers trying to survive in a tough economy with encroaching competition.

As one said to me, "Why is a liquor store more important to protect than my grocery store? I've got all kinds of competitors and they have none.

Why do the liquor vendors have more value to lawmakers than my family business? We're feeding the people in rural America.

Selling what our customers want to buy – we want that chance. We deserve that chance."

Who can argue that? They've given their life's work to small, family owned grocery stores their customers regard as central to the town's core. And yet for six decades they've been hamstrung by a legislative body that continues to give more emphasis to protecting the liquor stores share of the market, rather than letting businesses freely compete ... and giving small grocers the opportunity to sell their customers the products they want to buy and to reap the profits from those sales giving them a better chance in their small communities.

And then there are liquor store owners like Jon in Dexter who wants this law to pass so he can expand to sell other products to his customers. In his rural area, this would be a much needed benefit for the people.

To each of you I respectfully ask that you consider HB 2206 for all its merits, but the greatest being the opportunity it offers the smaller grocer and liquor stores wanting to expand to help their communities.

Jessica Lucas