

adults and minors of the alcoholic beverages laws a civil offense; providing for the appeal for adults of adjudications of a violation; making technical changes; providing for the suspension of certain persons' driver's licenses for certain violations of alcoholic beverage laws; revising certain provisions pertaining to offenses related to alcoholic beverage offenses; clarifying language; and generally relating to decriminalizing the offenses for violations of the alcoholic beverages laws in this State.

May 27, 1980

Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin  
Speaker of the House of Delegates  
State House  
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 1678.

House Bill 1678 is a major and innovative attempt at addressing a significant problem, i.e., the unlawful use of alcohol and the increasingly serious consequences thereof.

I applaud the General Assembly at recognizing the need for action in this most important area, and I commit my Administration in assisting that effort in the current interim and the coming Session. However, as the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County indicated while testifying in support of this measure at the Executive Hearing thereon, while I share the general concerns which led to the introduction and passage of this measure, it is abundantly clear to me that the bill must be given the benefit of further consideration and refinement before it can responsibly be signed into law.

By way of example only, although the record is clear that the General Assembly thought and proclaimed that it was decriminalizing all alcoholic beverages offenses and providing an exclusively civil procedure for the handling of such violations, the Attorney General's careful review of the bill indicates that it may well be an inadvertent mixture of (a) the decriminalization of some provisions, (b) the failure to decriminalize yet other provisions, and (c) the provision of dual criminal and civil alternatives with respect to yet other provisions.

Assuming arguendo, that the legislation does successfully completely decriminalize the alcoholic beverage laws, both police and police-related organizations have strenuously objected to the repeal of their arrest powers and the substitution of a citation procedure therefor. Indeed, the City Council of Baltimore has felt so strongly