

LOCAL LAW INTRO. NO. -2008

A LOCAL LAW amending the Laws of Westchester County prohibiting, and establishing fines for knowingly allowing a party, gathering, or event where minors are present and alcoholic beverages are consumed by one or more minors.

BE IT ENACTED by the Board of Legislators of the County of Westchester as follows:

Section 1. A new Chapter 704 is hereby added to the Laws of Westchester County to read as follows:

**CHAPTER 704
SOCIAL HOST LAW**

- § 704.01. Short title.**
- § 704.02. Legislative intent.**
- § 704.03. Definitions.**
- § 704.04. Unlawful consumption of alcohol by minor at a residence.**
- § 704.05. Penalties.**
- § 704.06. Effect on other laws.**
- § 704.07. Severability.**
- § 704.08. Reverse preemption.**

Sec. 704.01. Short title

This chapter law shall be known and may be cited as the “Social Host Law.”

Sec. 704.02. Legislative intent.

The Legislature of the County of Westchester finds that underage drinking is a significant societal problem that has generated widespread concern in Westchester County. Although the New York State Legislature has acted to proscribe the unlawful giving, selling and possessing of alcohol in relation to minors, it has not regulated the situation where a person who is twenty-one years old or more knowingly allows the consumption of alcohol by a minor in his or her home or other privately owned property. The underage consumption of alcohol, whether at a party or a

smaller gathering, poses an immediate threat to the public health, safety and welfare of the residents of Westchester County, often leading to alcohol abuse by minors, physical altercations, accidental injuries, neighborhood vandalism, excessive noise disturbances requiring the intervention of local law enforcement, and the commission of violent crimes including sexual offenses and serious assaults. This local law will serve to deter the consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors by holding those persons who are twenty-one years old or more responsible when they knowingly allow the consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors at their residences or on their privately owned property.

Sec. 704.03. Definitions.

Wherever used in this chapter, unless the context or subject matter otherwise requires:

- a. "Alcohol" shall mean ethyl alcohol, hydrated oxide of ethyl or spirits of wine, from whatever source or by whatever means produced.
- b. "Alcoholic beverage" shall mean any liquor, wine, beer, spirits, cider or other liquid, or solid, patented or not, composed of, or containing, alcohol or spirits, whether or not brewed, fermented or distilled, and capable of being consumed by a person, except that confectionery containing alcohol as provided by subdivision twelve of section two hundred of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law shall not be regarded as an alcoholic beverage within the meaning of this section.
- c. "Allow" shall mean to give permission for, or approval of, possession or consumption of alcohol or an alcoholic beverage, by any of the following means:
 - (i) in writing;
 - (ii) by one or more oral statements; or

(iii) by any form of conduct that would cause a reasonable person to believe that permission or approval has been given.

d. "Controls a private residence" shall mean possesses authority to regulate, direct, restrain, superintend, control or govern the conduct of other individuals on or within that residence, and includes, but is not limited to, a possessory right.

e. "Knowingly" shall mean to be aware of.

f. "Minor" shall mean any person under the age of twenty-one.

g. "Reasonable corrective action" shall include, but not be limited to:

1) making a prompt demand that such minor refrain from further consumption of the alcoholic beverages; and

2) if such minor does not comply with such request, either promptly reporting such underage consumption of alcohol:

(i) to the local law enforcement agency; or

(ii) to the minor's parent or guardian.

h. "Residence" shall mean any home, apartment, condominium, co-operative unit or other dwelling unit of any kind, including yards and open areas adjacent thereto.

Sec. 704.04. Unlawful consumption of alcohol by minor at a residence.

a. It shall be unlawful for any person who is twenty-one years old or more who owns, rents, or otherwise controls a private residence, to knowingly allow the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by one or more minors on such premises or to fail to take reasonable corrective action upon becoming aware of the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by one or more minors on such premises.

b. The provisions of subdivision a. of this section shall not apply to:

- (i) the consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by a minor whose parent or guardian has given such alcohol or alcoholic beverage to such minor;
- (ii) the use and consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by a minor for religious purposes; or
- (iii) the use or consumption of alcohol or alcoholic beverages by a minor who is a student in a curriculum licensed or registered by the New York State Education Department and the student is required to taste or imbibe alcoholic beverages in courses which are a part of the required curriculum, provided such alcoholic beverages are used only for instructional purposes during class conducted pursuant to such curriculum.

§ 704.05. Penalties.

A violation of section 704.04 of this chapter shall constitute a violation of law for the first and second offense, and a misdemeanor for the third and subsequent offenses. Each offense and subsequent offense shall be punishable as follows:

- a. First offense. Any person who violates section 704.04 of this chapter shall be punished by a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars, where such violation constitutes the person's first offense in violation of this provision.
- b. Second offense. Any person who violates section 704.04 of this chapter shall be punished by a fine of five hundred dollars, where such violation constitutes the person's second offense in violation of this provision.
- c. Third and subsequent offenses. Any person who violates section 704.04 of this chapter shall be punished by either a fine of one thousand dollars, a term of imprisonment not to exceed one year, or both a fine of one thousand dollars and a term of imprisonment not to exceed one

year, where such violation constitutes the person's third or subsequent offense in violation of this provision.

§ 704.06. Effect on other laws.

The provisions of section 704.04 of this chapter shall not in any way affect the application of any other law, where appropriate, including but not limited to New York State Penal Law section 260.10 (Endangering the welfare of a child) and section 260.20(2) (Unlawfully dealing with a child in the first degree).

§ 704.07. Severability.

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, or section of this chapter shall be held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, or the application of this chapter to any person or set of circumstances shall be held invalid, such invalidity or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, section, or operation of this chapter directly involved in the controversy in which the judgment shall have been rendered. To further this end, the provisions of this chapter are hereby declared to be severable.

§ 704.08. Reverse Preemption.

This chapter shall be null and void on the day that federal or statewide legislation goes into effect, incorporating either the same or substantially similar provisions as are contained in this chapter, or in the event that a pertinent state or federal administrative agency issues and promulgates regulations preempting such action by the County of Westchester. The County Legislature may determine via mere resolution whether or not identical or substantially similar federal or statewide legislation, or pertinent preempting state or federal regulations have been enacted for purposes of triggering the provisions of this section.

Section 2. This local law shall take effect immediately.