



An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, TD
Dept of the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Merrion Street Upper
Dublin 2

Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, TD
Department of Health
Miesian Plaza
Baggot Street Lower
Dublin 2

27 May 2025

Dear Taoiseach and Minister for Health,

Alcohol Health Labelling

I am writing to encourage you to introduce Ireland's regulations on health information labelling of alcohol products, as legislated for under the ground-breaking Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018. Your action is of international importance as once again we here in Scotland, the UK, and others beyond, look to Ireland for public health leadership.

As you will be aware, alcohol is classified as a group one carcinogen, along with tobacco and asbestos. Alcohol consumption causes many health harms and increased risks including cancers and liver disease. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy also increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, and can lead to long-term harm to the baby. Despite this, people remain largely unaware of these health risks and do not even have access to basic nutritional information regarding the alcohol products they are buying.

The measures set out in the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018, including provisions to mandate health warning labels, were passed unanimously because it was without doubt the right thing to do. Ireland has historically been a world leader in public health policy, becoming the first country to introduce comprehensive smoke-free legislation. The 2018 Act was also trailblazing in upholding the Irish people's right to knowledge and better health, setting an example to the rest of the world.

Since the Act was introduced, the evidence base on the effectiveness of alcohol labelling, particularly of health warnings, has become even stronger. Earlier this year, the World Health Organization recommended that alcohol labels should warn of cancer risk, to help address gaps

in public awareness and empower people to make informed choices. The WHO recommends that countries mandate health warning labels rather than rely on self-regulation of alcohol producers, as these may opt for inconspicuous placement and ambiguous messaging.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government have long recognised the role of labelling in enhancing public awareness of health risks and supporting public health goals, making a commitment in its 2018 Alcohol Framework to pursue a mandatory approach if industry self-regulation leads to insufficient progress. They are watching developments in Ireland closely.

The alcohol industry is once again seeking to delay and derail effective public health action. In Scotland, big alcohol has made exaggerated claims about the impact of with minimum unit price on exports and the costs of compliance, none of which were borne out, as demonstrated by the independent evaluation. Similarly, your labelling requirements would have no effect on alcohol exports and compliance could be achieved through simple stick-on labels.

We encourage you to stand firm in putting public health ahead of private profit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alison Douglas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alison" and the last name "Douglas" clearly distinguishable.

Alison Douglas
Chief Executive