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Contact: Butler Associates
Christopher Collora

(646) 213-1387/ccollora@butlerassociates.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Queens Liquor Merchants, Local Workers, and Assemblyman Ron Kim Rally Against Proposed College Point Liquor Mega-Store



Video Link- <https://youtu.be/undfDO4jAAc>

FLUSHING, NY- Over 200 liquor store merchants, sales representatives, union delivery drivers, and others, including Assemblyman Ron Kim, rallied to protest a proposed 30,000-square-foot Total Wines mega store attempting to open in College Point, Queens.

The rally was organized by the non-profit Metropolitan Package Store Association (MetroPSA), which represents some 350 package liquor stores in Queens and over 2,500 independent liquor stores in the downstate New York area. Many believe that a Total Wines store in this location would severely disrupt the local liquor store industry in the New York City area.

“If approved, market dominance and market devastation will follow,” said MetroPSA Executive Director **Michael Correr**. “In New York City it is estimated that 9% of all store fronts are empty. We can’t let the local neighborhood liquor merchants become the next group of storekeepers to go extinct. We must stop Total’s advance into the Big Apple.”

“This is one of the very few places where we’re able to protect local jobs,” **Assemblyman Kim** said. “Our liquor industry, our small business owners are the heart and soul of our communities and we have to take a stand. We have to say no to big liquor.”

“When you spend a dollar at Total Wine, that dollar is gone and is extracted from our community. If you spend that dollar with a local family owned independent small business owner, that dollar gets recirculated in the community over and over again. These folks behind me, they live in our communities, their kids go to school here, these are our neighbors, these are our small business owners, we have to protect them,” said Kim.

Many liquor store owners who attended the rally are recent immigrants whose businesses are the key to a decent life for their families and have allowed them to climb the ladder into the middle class.

Many fear that Total Wines will draw away customers by undercutting prices, destroying the local liquor market along with the opportunity that these small businesses create for genuine independent liquor merchants. Even if these stores don’t go out of business, many fear the value of the businesses themselves will plummet, making them harder to sell and harder for the owners to retire.

Such is the case for [Dennis Hwang](#), whose father, an immigrant from Taiwan, purchased a liquor store in the 1980’s and supported his family as he raised Dennis and his brother.

“He pretty much put his blood, sweat and tears into it,” said Hwang. “The little store may look old but that store really helped me and my brother. It put us through college, gave us a good education, he gave us the best life that he could... It’s a scary thought to see that so many people that work so hard for their businesses and it could all go away just like that.”

“I would have to close my store because there’s no way I could compete with them,” said [Yili Lim](#) owner of a liquor store in Queens. “If I don’t do this how am I going to support my kids? I don’t mind a little competition, but I don’t want to be put out of business.”

Many of the liquor store owners who attended the rally say they’re not buying the latest tactics by the Total Wines company to expand their presence in New York State after it had its two previous applications - in Stony Brook on Long Island and in Westchester County - denied by the NY State Liquor Authority (SLA).

The application for the College Point store was made by Michelle Trone, the daughter of U.S. Congressman David Trone of Maryland, whose family owns Total Wines, which has 200 stores nationwide.

The application uses a Maryland address and reveals that Michelle Trone obtained a \$10 million line of credit.

“I don’t need someone who lives out of state to tell me about New York,” said [Karen Falkowski](#), owner of K&W Liquors in Franklin Square, NY. “Somebody who lives in Washington D.C. and is connected to a conglomerate of 200 stores across the nation doesn’t know a damn thing about New York. They’re just bullies that are trying to move in and I don’t know what they have to improve... it’s a chain store. They are being funded by all of their other stores, that’s just common sense.”

“If I had to take from my husband’s 401K to be able to open the store and she [Trone] was able to get a 10 million dollar loan, then she needs to tell me what bank she’s at because I need to go get a loan” said [Toni Sinclair](#), owner of Wine Room of Forrest Hills, who says her store has experienced a 30% drop in business since a Total Wines opened in Westbury. “Any accountant looks at that and says wait a second, you had one-hundred-thousand in assets and you were able to secure a 10-million-dollar loan, what bank is that? It’s called bank of Daddy.”

Many local elected officials including Assemblyman Kim and, most recently, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have written letters in opposition to the Total Wine’s proposal, urging the SLA to reject the application when it comes up for a hearing, possibly as soon as this fall.

“We’re all here collectively to say no to Total Wine and big liquor,” Kim said. “The hyper-scale monopolistic model that’s predicated on undercutting the entire market by predatory pricing practices will demolish our local economy starting with our small businesses and that is wrong.”

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