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Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:
HB1045: Frederick County - Alcoholic Beverages - Class L Beer, Wine, and Liquor License

Across Maryland, there are 94 breweries, 25 distilleries and over 80 wineries. In Frederick County there are more than any other county at 17 breweries, 7 wineries, and 5 distilleries. The craft beverage industry has been a major tourist attraction and employer. The craft beverage industry, in general and especially in Frederick, is a close-knit group who are mutually supportive, and cross promote each other.

The class L license would allow the Frederick Craft Beverage industry to offer one another's beverages in tasting rooms thereby increasing awareness of other Breweries, distilleries, and wineries while accommodating the full spectrum of visitor's preferences when visiting a brewery, winery, or distillery's tasting room.

Additionally, it would increase consumer awareness of craft beverage manufacturers who do not have a facility open to the public or tasting room—such as the American Shochu Company, the only distillery in America to make this traditional Japanese spirit.

While there is opposition to this idea based on the inaccurate belief that it will put traditional alcoholic beverage businesses at a disadvantage, quite the opposite is true. These craft beverage establishments are tourist generating facilities that bring new and returning tourists to town who then explore the surrounding area, stay for dinner, and overnight accommodations.

The notion that these will proliferate the number of bars in an area and create a public nuisance, is also a misunderstanding of the typical visitor to a craft beverage tasting room. Most are open fewer days-a-week, most close at or before 8:00 pm, and all close at 10 pm.

The difference between visiting a traditional bar, tavern, or restaurant and visiting the holder of a Class L license is similar to the difference between going to see live music and listening to recorded music. Or going to see a live sporting event or watching it on television. You don't always want to hear live music, and often it is easier and more enjoyable to watch a game rather than go to the stadium. One requires more planning, takes more effort, costs more, and is more of a special event. Going to a restaurant is easy, often close by, and familiar. Going to a brewery, winery, or distillery is out of the ordinary and more of an occasion rather than meeting friends for a drink. The Class L license holders will bring additional tourists and patrons to an area rather than taking patrons away from current establishments.

This license would improve, grow, and support the entire industry and tourism in general. I thank you for your thoughtful consideration and request a favorable committee report.

Respectfully,

Delegate Kenneth P. Kerr
District 3B – Frederick County