



## House Bill 374

### Prince George's County - Alcoholic Beverages - Cigar Lounge License

February 19, 2024

Position: **OPPOSE**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The *Restaurant Association of Maryland* opposes HB 374, which would allow for a cigar lounge liquor license to be issued in Prince George's County.

Many of our restaurant bars accommodated smoking customers before Maryland's Clean Indoor Air Act became law in 2008. Given that the General Assembly banned smoking in indoor areas open to the public, including establishments that serve alcohol and other workplaces, it would be unfair to subsequently allow alcohol to be served at establishments that allow smoking under the retail tobacco business exemption of the Clean Indoor Air Act.

Under Section 24-501 of the Act's definition of "Indoor area open to the public," an indoor area of any establishment licensed or permitted under the Alcoholic Beverages Article of Maryland's Code for the sale or possession of alcoholic beverages is also covered under the smoking ban. This means that a cigar lounge/shop can allow smoking under the retail tobacco business exemption of the Clean Indoor Air Act but cannot also be licensed to sell/serve alcohol. And we oppose the passage of legislation that would allow for this.

Although we do not generally take positions on local alcohol bills, we are concerned about the precedent that passage of this legislation would create statewide. We have also opposed similar cigar lounge liquor license bills proposed for Frederick, Harford, and Wicomico Counties in recent years. None of those bills passed.

For these reasons, we request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long horizontal line.

Melvin R. Thompson  
Senior Vice President