

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 689
Economic Matters

(Delegate Eckardt, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs

Dorchester County - Alcoholic Beverages - Bottle Clubs

This bill establishes requirements related to the operation of “bottle clubs” in Dorchester County. A bottle club may not evade the alcoholic beverage license laws, including hours of operation and the sale, giving, serving, dispensing, keeping, and allowing the consumption of any alcoholic beverage, setups, or other component parts of mixed drinks. A person who operates a business establishment for profit that is not licensed to serve alcohol may not knowingly allow customers to bring alcohol for consumption into an unlicensed building. The Dorchester County Board of License Commissioners may grant a waiver, upon application, from the bill’s requirements. The board must adopt regulations to implement the bill’s provisions. A person violating the bill’s provisions is guilty of a misdemeanor and is subject to a fine of up to \$10,000.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Any increase in fine revenue from violations is expected to be minimal. No effect on expenditures.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A “bottle club” is defined as a club, room, or premises: (1) that serves, sells, gives, or dispenses alcohol to its members or guests; (2) that keeps for its members or guests any alcohol; (3) that allows to be consumed on its premises any alcohol

reserved or purchased by the members or guests; (4) at which patrons are served, given, or allowed to consume alcohol after legal closing hours from the supplies that the patrons have previously purchased or reserved; or (5) that sells, dispenses, or serves to, keeps for, or allows to be consumed any setups or other component parts of mixed alcoholic drinks by its members or guests.

Current Law: Various other counties place restrictions on bottle club activities. The provisions for Cecil and St. Mary's counties are very similar to the bill's provisions; however, the maximum fine in those counties is \$1,000. Most other counties with bottle club restrictions have more stringent penalties, authorizing a maximum fine of \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years. The following counties currently restrict bottle club activities: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, St. Mary's, and Baltimore City.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 899 (Senator Colburn) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Dorchester County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 2, 2006
ncs/hlb

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