

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 218 (Senator Young, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Economic Matters

Alcoholic Beverages - Retail Wine Sellers - Shochu and Soju

This bill authorizes shochu and soju that is up to 24% alcohol by volume to be sold for off-premises consumption in the State by any licensee who is authorized to sell wine for off-premises consumption. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Shochu and soju may be sold under the same conditions that apply to the sale of wine. Any limit on the sale of wine by volume does not apply to the sale of sochu or soju. The bill defines “shochu” as a Japanese alcoholic beverage that contains up to 24% alcohol by volume and is derived from agricultural products. “Soju” is defined as a Korean alcoholic beverage that contains up to 24% alcohol by volume and is derived from agricultural products.

Current Law: Statutorily, wine includes light wine, sparkling wine that is carbonated, and fortified wine. Many jurisdictions limit the alcohol content of beverages that are sold under a retail beer and wine license to a maximum of 22% alcohol by volume. This means that any alcoholic beverages with higher alcohol content, such as some varieties of schochu and soju, can only be sold using a retail beer, wine, and liquor license.

Background: Shochu is a common type of distilled alcoholic beverage traditionally produced in Japan. It is often distilled from rice, barley, sweet potatoes, buckwheat, or brown sugar and may contain other ingredients such as chestnut, sesame seeds, and carrots. Soju is a common type of distilled alcoholic beverage traditionally produced in South Korea. It is often distilled from rice, wheat, barley, potatoes, sweet potatoes, or tapioca.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 29, 2018
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