

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 802
Finance

(Dorchester County Senators)

Economic Matters

Dorchester County - Alcoholic Beverages - Venue Beer, Wine, and Liquor License

This bill establishes a venue beer, wine, and liquor license in Dorchester County and authorizes the Dorchester County Board of License Commissioners to issue the license to a nonprofit or for-profit retail business that hosts weddings, banquets, parties, meetings, and similar events at a venue that (1) is at least 2,000 square feet in size; (2) can accommodate at least 100 individuals; and (3) has adequate bathroom facilities. The license authorizes a holder to sell or serve beer, wine, and liquor at retail, for on-premises consumption during an event in which food is also provided. The hours of sale are Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 1:45 a.m. the following day and on Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. The annual fee for the license is \$1,500, and the license cannot be transferred to another location. The bill also authorizes the board to issue a venue beer, wine, and liquor license to an establishment within 300 feet of a place of worship or school if the board receives written consent for the issuance of the license from each place of worship or school. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Dorchester County revenues increase, beginning in FY 2026, to the extent that venue beer, wine, and liquor licenses are issued under the bill. Dorchester County can handle any additional enforcement activity with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Minimal overall, but potentially meaningful for a nonprofit or retail business that is able to sell beer, wine, and liquor at their venues under the bill.

Analysis

Current Law: Maryland's 23 counties, Baltimore City, and the City of Annapolis all have boards of license commissioners that issue and enforce retail alcoholic beverages licenses in their jurisdictions. Within each jurisdiction, the most common types of retail licenses are Class A, Class B, Class C, and Class D licenses. Each license authorizes the sale of alcoholic beverages in a different manner and may authorize the sale of alcohol for on-premises consumption. For example, Class A licenses generally only allow the sale of alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption, and Class B licenses are generally issued to restaurants and allow the sale of alcoholic beverages with food.

Each local jurisdiction has its own regulatory processes and requirements in place for who can apply for and obtain a license and how many licenses, in total, may be issued for use in the jurisdiction.

In Dorchester County, the board is prohibited from issuing a new license for an establishment that is within 300 feet in a direct line of a place of worship or a public or nonpublic kindergarten, elementary, or secondary school except for (1) a license for a premises that was licensed on October 1, 1996; (2) a class B beer, wine, and liquor license for a premises in Cambridge, Secretary, or Hurlock; or (3) a temporary license.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 564 (Dorchester County Delegation) - Economic Matters.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 12, 2025
km/tso Third Reader - March 19, 2025
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 19, 2025

Analysis by: Andrew Stover

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510