

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 994—Alcoholic Beverages—Retail Delivery—Class A License Holders

On behalf of TFWS, Inc. and Corridor Fine Wine, Inc.

House Economic Matters Committee

February 19, 2021

In March of 2020, Governor Larry Hogan declared a State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after declaring the State of Emergency, he issued an Executive Order that allowed off-premise retail licensees that sell alcoholic beverages in the state to offer beer, wine or liquor for home and curbside delivery during the state of emergency. At the time, the justifications for this emergency measure were obvious. For those consumers who sought an alternative way to shop for beverages and other goods at their local liquor store, without entering the licensed premises, they could easily do so.

Because the State of Emergency is still in place, licensees continue to deliver to customers who prefer to shop in that way. Our stores and many others invested heavily in technology and operational capabilities to make this service available to our customers who shopped in our stores during the past year. The investment in safety and technology was worth it. Home and curbside delivery has been warmly embraced by the customers of our stores and countless others around the state. Many of our customers believe that it should become a permanent feature of state law for those who prefer an alternative way to shop.

House Bill 994 would accomplish two things. First, it would allow Class A retailers the ability to deliver to their customers permanently, once the State of Emergency ends. Prior to the pandemic, some but not all local licensing boards in Maryland expressly authorized home delivery (but not curbside delivery). Curbside delivery, which occurs outside the licensed premises (rather than at one's home), is simply another form of customer delivery. HB 994 would automatically guarantee both forms of delivery in all jurisdictions for Class A license holders, which simply codifies what these licensees have been doing for the past year.

Second, the bill would allow Class A license holders to deliver statewide, beyond the boundaries of the county in which they are licensed. We believe this makes sense as a lot of customers shop for products, including alcohol, outside of the county in which they reside. They should be able to accept a delivery from those retailers, too. Enforcement should not be an issue as issues/potential infractions could still be reported to the licensing board with jurisdiction over the particular licensee in question.

We urge a favorable report on HB 994. This bill, like others, makes permanent a customer-friendly measure that was put in place during the pandemic and is working without issue. Further, the bill allows Class A retailers the ability to deliver statewide if they so choose. We believe House Bill 994, in total, is a customer-friendly measure that allows the alcohol retail industry the ability to provide customers with a convenient way to shop now and into the future.