



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB 618

March 4, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 618 – Baltimore City – Alcoholic Beverages – Sales in Grocery Stores & Supermarkets – Referendum

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 618.

SB 618 will put a referendum on the ballot in Baltimore City which offers voters the opportunity to authorize their Board of License Commissioners to issue Class A beer and light wine licenses to grocery stores, chain stores, supermarkets, or discount houses. Eligible establishments would be authorized to sell beer and wine Monday through Sunday from 10 am to midnight.

Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia allow grocery stores to sell beer. Forty states and the District of Columbia allow them to sell wine. The vast majority of grocery stores, chains, supermarkets, and discount houses in Maryland cannot currently sell beer or light wine. This bill does not itself allow the issuance of these licenses to the aforementioned stores; instead, it offers residents of one of the state's larger jurisdictions the opportunity to allow it within their borders, subject to popular vote.

Through agencies like the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), the BCA has been working to encourage supermarkets and grocery stores to come to the City and to retain those that currently operate in the City. Grocery stores operate with tight profit margins; the sale of beer and light wine from grocery stores will increase these margins. This bill would help BCA by incentivizing these businesses to operate across the City. Finally, to better engage with residents and safeguard their interests, the change will be put before City voters through a referendum and will only move forward if it secures a majority of the popular vote.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 618.