

Testimony Oppose SB603

Kim Lawson
Fishpaws Marketplace
954 Ritchie Hwy
Arnold. Md 21012
Anne Arundel County
klawson@fishpawsmarket.com

My business, Fishpaws Marketplace is a third-generation alcohol retailer in Anne Arundel County which dates to 1935. We employ between 20 and 25 people with employee benefits. We donate at a minimum \$10,000 yearly to local charities. Corporate businesses traditionally have lots of red tape for donations, so non-profits rarely go to them. We support many local breweries, distillers, and wineries. We carry over 260 local beers, wines, and spirits to support locally made products. Grocery stores will only carry the top selling SKU's, so they will have far less products especially local products than the current liquor stores

I know the opposition is touting convenience as the reason for this legislation. We have licensees in every shopping center which houses a grocery store, so the goods are available in the same shopping trip for the consumer. The supermarkets and chains are not going to employ an additional 20 to 25 people with the addition of alcohol. Also, these local shopping center stores will be pushed out due to competition or their landlords. With the number of licensees we have, I do not think convenience is an issue. This bill would only transfer business from small locally owned businesses to large corporately owned.

I have like many other store owners, have invested 2.5 to 3 million in our business. I just last week spent \$75,000 redoing our floors which required a three-day closure to complete this job. We used all local contractors. This bill will have businesses experiencing a loss of business, loss of jobs and their investment and retirements.

The alcohol business is extremely complicated with many rules and regulations. Unfortunately, the public does not understand the intricacies of the industry. The legislature more fully understands the complexity of the laws and is better able to weigh the pros and cons. The public health and small business impacts need to be considered. Alcohol is a controlled substance not a commodity. Unfortunately, the public does not understand this balancing act.

The bill automatically will allow 1300 to 1500 additional outlets with no regard to saturation of a market area or the legal control of alcohol, a controlled substance.

I ask you to oppose this bill. Let us support local small business in all ways by keeping jobs, taxes, local product sales in Maryland. Let us keep Maryland pride in Maryland.