

SB0618_FAV_ComptrollerBillHenry.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Henry

Position: FAV



BILL HENRY
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

City Hall – Room 204
100 Holliday St Baltimore, MD 21202

March 2, 2022

The Hon. Paul Pinsky, Chairman
Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate of Maryland
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 618, “Baltimore City—Alcoholic Beverages—Sales in Grocery Stores and Supermarkets—Referendum.” SB 618 will be heard by the Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee on March 4, 2022. SB 618 would authorize the Baltimore City Board of License Commissioners to issue a Class A beer and light wine license to grocery stores, supermarkets, chain stores and discount houses in the city. The bill requires licensees to sell beer and wine only between 10:00 a.m. and midnight, and it specifies how alcoholic beverages are to be stored during hours when sale is prohibited. Finally, enactment of SB 618 is subject to approval by the voters of Baltimore City in a referendum on the ballot at the general election to be held in November 2022.

Before my election as Baltimore City Comptroller in November 2020, I served for thirteen years as a member of the City Council. During my tenure on the council, two issues persistently surfaced as challenges to me and my colleagues: the prevalence of corner liquor stores and the lack of fresh and healthy food options in certain areas of the City, particularly in historically underinvested Black and Brown communities. The absence of full-service grocery stores and supermarkets in large sections of east and west Baltimore in particular forces residents to rely on establishments such as corner liquor stores, convenience stores, and even gas stations for their nutritional needs. These types of retail businesses, often owned by people who don’t live in the communities they serve, mostly sell processed food with high sodium and sugar content. I and many other stakeholders have put countless hours into efforts to incentivize the availability of fresh and healthy food for all residents of Baltimore on a more equitable basis.

Senate Bill 618 offers a simple and powerful incentive for grocery stores and supermarkets to expand into food priority areas in the City. By allowing these retailers to sell beer and wine, SB 618 offers the opportunity for higher profits; the retail grocery business is well known for its razor-thin profit margins and highly competitive business models. When locally based grocery chains such as Klein’s Shop Rite, which operates the only full-service supermarket in Baltimore’s Park Heights neighborhood, make decisions on where to expand, the additional revenue allowed under SB 618 could well be a key factor.

I strongly support SB 618 not just for the economic incentive it provides, but also its reasonable regulation on hours of sale and storage of alcoholic beverages by retailers. This bill will not turn a

The Hon. Cory McCray
Page Two

neighborhood Safeway into a larger version of a “package goods” store. I also support the requirement for a referendum. Regulation of liquor licenses is essentially a local issue, and it is entirely right that there should be robust public discussion and a vote by the people of Baltimore before it takes effect.

In short, SB 618 will allow a local solution for one of Baltimore’s most pressing problems. It will transform the retail grocery market in the city by moving it in the direction of equity and fairness, and it will do so after a public process and only with the approval of a majority of our voters. I commend Chairman McCray for his leadership on this issue, and I look forward to working with him and with all stakeholders to ensure that once this bill becomes law, our local governmental efforts harmonize with the new state law to maximize its benefits for my constituents, the people of Baltimore.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to give SB 618 a favorable report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 410-396-4577 or via email at comptroller@baltimorecity.gov.

Sincerely,



Bill Henry
Baltimore City Comptroller

CC: The Hon. Cory McCray
Ms. Natasha Mehu, Mayor’s Office of Government Relations

3_4_2022 Testimony for SB 618.pdf

Uploaded by: Cory McCray

Position: FAV

CORY V. McCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 618

**Baltimore City – Alcoholic Beverages – Sales in Grocery Stores and Supermarkets –
Referendum**

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I write to urge you to **support** Senate Bill 618. Allowing the purchase of beer and wine in Baltimore City's retail food stores provides access in more than one way.

Under Senate Bill 618, the Board of License Commissioners for Baltimore City is granted authorization to issue Class A beer and light wine licenses to grocery stores, chain stores, supermarkets, and/or discount houses. The bill also provides that the Act be submitted to referendum of Baltimore City's voters.

If successful, resulting revenue from alcohol sales will not only yield economic benefits, but a leveraging opportunity to address critical issues—like food scarcity within Baltimore's neighborhoods. Permitting sales would produce pathways for supermarkets in tougher neighborhoods to provide fresher and healthier choices, increasing food access and restoring our communities.

If enacted, Senate Bill 618 will take effect on July 1, 2022, and will require that certain practices are adopted in accordance with the change in law.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 618.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray

State Senator, 45th District

SB0618-EHEA-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Natasha Mehu

Position: FAV



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.

SB618-Royal Farms Shelby Kemp Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Shelby Kemp

Position: FAV



March 4, 2022

Senator Paul Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 618 - Baltimore City - Alcoholic Beverages - Sales in Grocery Stores and Supermarkets - Referendum- FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shelby Kemp. I am a Marketing Project Manager for Royal Farms Convenience Stores. Royal Farms main business includes convenience, fuel, and quick service restaurants. We are a third- generation family-owned business, headquartered in Baltimore city. We operate 27 stores in the City of Baltimore, and employ over 3,000 employees statewide.

We strongly support having the ability to purchase a license to sell beer and wine in our stores. At Royal Farms, we strive to cater to our customers and provide them with what they want. Data points to the fact that customers want the ability to purchase beer and wine at their local convenience or grocery store. Recent public opinion polls continue to demonstrate that consumers strongly support the ability to purchase beer and wine in convenience stores. Maryland is one out of three states that does not allow the purchase of beer and wine at convenience or grocery stores.

Royal Farms strongly support allowing Baltimore City citizens to decide this important question. Public opinion polls consistently indicate support for this measure.

In conclusion, allowing convenience stores and grocery stores to apply for a license to sell beer and wine will benefit consumers, our economy, and our state. Please vote in favor of SB 618.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Shelby Kemp".

Shelby Kemp
Marketing Project Manager
skemp@royalfarms.com

SB618-MdPHA-UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Raimee Eck

Position: UNF



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

SB 618 Baltimore City – Alcoholic Beverages – Sales in Grocery Stores and Supermarkets - Referendum

Hearing Date: 3/4/22

Committee: EHEA

Position: Unfavorable

Thank you, Chairman Pinsky, Vice-chair Kagan, and members of the EHEA Committee for holding this hearing on a voter referendum to allow beer and wine to be sold in chain stores, supermarkets, and discount houses. The Maryland Public Health Association’s Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis Network urges an unfavorable report on this bill.

There are at least three issues here, as we see it.

Passing a law like this through a voter referendum like this could lead to a massive increase in licenses in a short time period. Every Royal Farms, Highs, Safeway, etc, is automatically eligible for a license. Research consistently demonstrates that increased alcohol outlet density, especially for off-premise outlets (i.e., those who sell unopened containers), is associated with an increase in a number of harms, including violence, criminal activity, domestic violence, and child maltreatment. It is also very costly; a recent study in Baltimore City demonstrated that alcohol-related harms cost \$582 million each year, almost 40% of which the government is responsible for. Alcohol consumption has been steadily rising nationally, especially for women and minorities; as consumption rises, so do alcohol-related harms.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on SB 618.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

SB618-MdPHA-UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Raimee Eck

Position: UNF



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy *Vision:* Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

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