

MARLON AMPREY
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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Monday, February 19, 2024

Testimony of Delegate Marlon Amprey in Support of House Bill 847 Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Committee Members,

I am writing today to express my support for HB847, which seeks to amend existing regulations governing Class A alcoholic beverages licenses for food retailers and bring Maryland to the 21st Century like 46 other states across the country. This bill presents a timely and necessary opportunity to modernize our licensing system, support local businesses, and better serve the needs of communities across the state of Maryland.

Currently, the process for obtaining a Class A license presents significant challenges for food retailers, hindering their ability to offer a diversity of beverages to their customers in Maryland. This bill addresses these challenges by allowing and encouraging food retailers to purchase Class A licenses from existing license holders under certain circumstances, as well as by enabling them to apply directly to their local licensing boards for such licenses. By streamlining and simplifying this process, we can empower food retailers to expand their offerings and enhance the overall shopping experience for consumers with the goal of bringing food retail to communities that currently do not have any.

Furthermore, the ability for food retailers to obtain Class A licenses aligns with the evolving preferences and demands of consumers in Maryland. Many residents rely on food retailers as their primary source of groceries, and the availability of alcoholic beverages alongside other products saves time for busy consumers. By allowing food retailers to sell alcoholic beverages, we can meet this demand while also supporting local businesses and promoting economic growth. Many states in the US, like California, Pennsylvania, and Colorado, as well as Washington D.C., allow the sale of beer and wine at grocery and convenience stores with specific regulations in terms of the amount that can be bought and specific timings.

It is important to note that this bill includes several key safeguards to ensure responsible alcohol sales and consumption. For example, food retailers seeking to obtain Class A licenses must meet strict criteria and adhere to regulations established by their local licensing boards. These regulations may include requirements related to responsible service practices, employee training, and compliance with local alcohol laws. By upholding these standards, we can help prevent abuse and mitigate any potential negative impacts on public health and safety.

In summary, HB847 represents a balanced and pragmatic approach to alcohol licensing reform in Maryland. By empowering food retailers to obtain Class A licenses, we can expand consumer choice, support local businesses, and stimulate economic development. I urge the committee to carefully consider the benefits of this bill and take decisive action to advance its passage.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably on HB847.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlon Amprey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a distinct "A".

Delegate Marlon Amprey
40th Legislative District of Maryland