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Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1206 – Establishment of MD-Ireland Trade Commission

Maryland General Assembly Health & Government Operations Committee
Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee:

Diageo North America is contacting you in support of HB 1206. Diageo North America is the leading premium drinks business and one of the best-performing consumer packaged goods companies across the United States and Canada. Our 200 plus brands are enjoyed across our market and include some of the world’s oldest and best loved brands, such as Johnnie Walker, Ketel One, Captain Morgan, Crown Royal, Bulleit, Don Julio, and Guinness.

As you are aware, we own and operate Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, Ireland, the Guinness Open Gate Brewery in Baltimore County, and in September 2023 we opened our Guinness Open Gate Brewery in Chicago. In Maryland, we are Baltimore County’s top tourist destination where we serve food and brew multiple varieties of Guinness, including Baltimore Blonde for on-site consumption. Diageo has invested over \$90 million dollars in Baltimore County since 2018, and we’ve welcomed over 1.7 million visitors. We’ve contributed over \$2 million to our local community partners including Maryland Food Bank, Oyster Recovery Partnership, and Job Opportunities Task Force to name a few.

We are proud to bring this iconic brand and customer experience to the U.S. and have supported various Irish-American organizations and causes over the years including Friendly Son’s of St. Patrick, Hibernian Society, Irish Railroad Workers Museum, and Irish Dance Schools. We have also supported Maryland officials when trade delegations traveled to Ireland by supplying information and making introductions as needed. Additionally, we have welcomed the ambassadors from Ireland and Northern Ireland to our Maryland brewery.

Diageo supports HB 1206 which would establish the Maryland Ireland Trade Commission. We believe this Commission will further strengthen the relationship with the State of Maryland and Ireland by promoting business and investment opportunities in Maryland and Ireland.