



January 27, 2025

Re: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 324 -- Admissions & Amusement Tax on Food and Beverages

Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Budget & Tax Committee:

Diageo North America is contacting you in opposition to SB 324. 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 Open Gate Brewery](#) in Baltimore County, 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.

In January 2024, we launched our free [Learning Skills for Life program](#) in Baltimore with 70 graduating participants thus far. Learning Skills for Life is our business and hospitality skills program for those seeking employment in the hospitality industry but who may have faced barriers to education and employment in their lives. Our program provides equal access to business and hospitality skills and resources to increase participants' employability, improve livelihoods, and support a thriving hospitality sector that works for all.

Diageo has significant concerns about the potential negative impacts this legislation may have on Maryland's residents and businesses. Consumers are experiencing higher costs of goods due to increased inflation rates over the past few years, and by increasing taxes on food and beverages, these taxes place an additional burden on families. Implementing an additional tax on food and beverages consumed on-site could lead to increased prices for consumers. This may discourage dining out, adversely affecting local restaurants, cafes, and other establishments that are integral to our communities. The hospitality industry will find this additional tax burdensome, potentially leading to reduced sales, layoffs, or even closures.

In conclusion, Diageo respectfully urges you and your colleagues to oppose SB 324 and seek alternative approaches that support both the fiscal health of our local governments and the well-being of Maryland's residents and businesses.