



Members of Economic Matters, thank you for listening to us today about Del. Amprey's HB1379. We lend our voice of support for this critical modernization.

I've always found it odd as a native Marylander why I can't legally buy a six pack of beer at a chain store like I can in 47 other states. Prohibition seems so long ago, yet here we are still living with its vestiges 91 years later. Sure, we have figured out a way around. Maryland has developed a very complicated county liquor board system and private single owner solution, except in Montgomery County where the county distributes liquor. Doesn't it seem odd that we can now legally buy a joint but not Chardonnay with our salmon?

The 22 grandfathered stores in our state only further confuse the issue. The Salisbury Giant, the Hampden Royal Farms and the others only perpetuate the belief that we CAN actually buy at a chain store. Most Marylanders don't remember the dark-of-night 1978 legislative takeover by the store owners to eliminate the chain allowance or the 1979-81 ineffective fight by the chains to get back the right to obtain liquor licenses.

This isn't just an issue of convenience. For observant Jews who live in Baltimore County, for example, one of the two remaining counties with blue laws, they must figure out how to buy their sacramental wine Monday through Friday instead of Sunday when regularly shopping. For small, local producers, the chain store prohibition means they have to spend their limited resources visiting every single store versus easily gaining broader distribution. For the rest of us, no chain stores means much higher prices, sometimes as high as +33% higher. With higher grocery prices everywhere else, why should we continue paying more?

The other states with chain sales have very robust independent store communities. California, for example, has sales at Costco, Safeway, independent alcohol retailers, gas stations and bodegas all in the same area. We should not expect Maryland to be a different marketplace when chain stores can sell, one where competition will provide more choice and lower prices in a regulated environment. The rates of alcoholism, underage drinking and drunk driving are substantially the same with or without chain sales.

After 46 years of saying no, let's say yes!

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Borden
President