



February 17, 2025

Hon. C.T. Wilson, Chair  
Hon. Brian Crosby, Vice-Chair  
Maryland House Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegates Wilson and Crosby:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, a national trade association representing producers and marketers of distilled spirits and importers of wines sold in the United States in support of HB 770, entitled *"Baltimore County - Alcoholic Beverages - Sale or Delivery for Off-Premises Consumption."*

HB 770 would allow Baltimore County restaurants and bars to sell and deliver cocktails-to-go as long as the order is accompanied by a food purchase; is in an original container or a container closed with a cap, cork, seal, or lid with no holes for straws or sipping; proof of age is provided; and all local licensing board requirements are met.

As you know, Maryland allowed cocktails to-go on a temporary basis during the pandemic to support struggling hospitality businesses which represent more than 250,000 restaurant jobs across the state. Unfortunately, that law was allowed to sunset on June 30, 2023.

The hospitality industry was one of the most impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic and is still struggling to recover. In an effort to support the hospitality industry, states acted to allow restaurants and/or bars to sell cocktails to-go. At the end of 2020, 33 states were allowing cocktails to-go with 31 of the states allowing it on a temporary basis. Fast forward to today, and 29 states have since adopted permanent laws allowing cocktails to-go while six more continue to allow it temporarily. (Please see a map attached.)

What started as a lifeline to the hospitality industry has been a resounding success with business owners and consumers. Now, cocktails to-go have become a regular part of takeout dining for adult consumers in addition to providing stability for hospitality businesses as they continue to recover from the lasting impacts of COVID-19. These businesses still face challenges including supply chain disruptions, staffing shortages and inflation.

From the standpoint of responsibility, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States and the spirits industry as a whole are committed to responsible consumption and encourage moderation for adults who choose to drink alcohol. As the legislation makes clear, cocktails to-

go are intended for home consumption and all laws governing alcohol consumption and the prohibitions on drinking while driving must always be observed.

The future of the hospitality industry will be dependent upon many factors outside of the control of licensees, and this practice is something we believe is valuable to their continued recovery and long-term growth. We encourage the committee to support this important legislation and provide Baltimore County's hospitality businesses with this extra measure of flexibility in serving its customers.

We appreciate your consideration of our views regarding HB 770. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or our Maryland counsel, Hannah Garagiola.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Emily Smith  
Vice President State Public Policy  
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cc: Members of the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee