



February 18, 2026

Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 855 -- Baltimore County – Alcoholic Beverages – Manufacturer’s Limited Beer, Wine, and Liquor Permit

Maryland Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Pamela G. Beidle, Chair

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Finance Committee:

Diageo North America is contacting you in support of SB 855. Diageo North America is a 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. We are proud to be the premier spirits and beer sponsor of The Preakness Stakes since 2023 and look forward to our continued relationship with one of Maryland’s signature events.

As you are aware, we own and operate [Guinness Open Gate Brewery](#) in Baltimore County with 134 employees, where we serve food and brew multiple varieties of Guinness, including Baltimore Blonde for on-site consumption. Diageo has invested over \$90 million in Baltimore County since 2018, and we’ve welcomed nearly 2 million visitors. As a result, OGB is one of the top tourist destinations in Baltimore County. We’ve contributed over \$2.5 million to our local community partners including Maryland Food Bank, Oyster Recovery Partnership, and Job Opportunities Task Force to name a few. Our brewery is proud to sponsor the Baltimore Orioles and U.S. Naval Academy athletics.

Open Gate Brewery’s commitment to the local community also includes our free [Learning Skills for Life program](#) in Baltimore, which has had nearly 200 graduates since the program was launched in 2024. 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.

Open Gate Brewery strongly supports SB855 that would allow catered private events to be held at OGB and other Class 5 breweries in Baltimore County, similar to a law passed in 2024 for Frederick County. This legislation is critical for the growth and sustainability of OGB’s business, as we lose numerous private event opportunities each year due to our inability under current law to accommodate private events at which wine and spirits may be served in addition to beer. This has resulted in a direct loss of over \$1 million annually for OGB.

Our business, like many in the hospitality and beverage sector, is facing economic headwinds, as consumers are increasingly cautious about their discretionary spending. Despite these challenges, the long-term fundamentals of the alcohol industry remain strong, with premiumization and evolving consumer preferences offering a substantial runway for growth. However, to realize this potential, we must be able to participate fully in the market, including catering for private events where demand for wine and spirits is high.

SB855 will not only help us recover lost revenue but also allow us to reinvest in our business, support local employment, and contribute to the broader economic recovery. We urge you to support this bill and enable businesses like ours to thrive in a challenging economic environment.

Thank you for your consideration.