



February 18, 2026

Re: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 72 -- Baltimore County – Alcoholic Beverages – Sale for Off–Premises Consumption

Maryland Senate Finance Committee
Senator Pamela G. Beidle, Chair

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Finance Committee:

Diageo North America is contacting you in support of SB 72. 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.

SB 72 provides a practical and responsible framework that allows Class B and Class D license holders to obtain a permit to sell mixed drinks or cocktails for off-premises consumption under clearly defined safeguards. Specifically, the bill requires that cocktails be purchased with prepared food, that the purchaser be at least 21 years of age with valid photo identification, that sales occur no later than 11:00 p.m., and that beverages be provided in sealed containers with no openings for straws or sipping.

This legislation builds on lessons learned during the pandemic, when to-go cocktails provided critical support to Maryland’s restaurants and bars. For many locally owned establishments, off-premises beverage sales were the difference between survival and permanent closure. Even in today’s environment,

the hospitality industry continues to face economic pressures, including rising food and labor costs, supply chain volatility, and cautious consumer spending.

Consumers increasingly expect flexibility and convenience in how they purchase food and beverages. Allowing restaurants and bars to offer sealed cocktails with prepared meals aligns Maryland with many other states that have modernized their alcohol laws while preserving appropriate safeguards.

Importantly, this bill supports local businesses, protects jobs, and generates additional sales tax and alcohol tax revenue for the State. It provides establishments with a modest but meaningful opportunity to strengthen their financial stability without expanding hours of operation or removing critical compliance requirements.

SB 72 is a thoughtful, measured approach that promotes economic resilience, supports Maryland's hospitality sector, and maintains strong regulatory standards.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 72.

Thank you for your time and consideration.