

# Testimony in Opposition to SB 75 (2026)

## Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers

**Submitted to:** Senate Finance Committee

**Hearing Date:** February 20, 2026

**Position:** OPPOSE SB 75

---

### I. Introduction / Personal Statement

Good afternoon, Respected Chair and Members of the Committee.

My name is [*Amrish Vyas*], I am here in my personal capacity of Howard County resident and I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 75 — *Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers*. While the intent to modernize Maryland’s alcoholic beverage laws is understandable, this bill would vastly expand alcohol sales into large food retailers (e.g., supermarkets and grocery stores) and would have significant negative impacts on public health, small business viability, community well-being, and on resources small business owners have invested in our communities for centuries.

---

### II. Economic Impact on Small, Independent Businesses

#### 1. Unfair Competition & Market Disruption

- Allowing grocery stores and large food retailers to acquire Class A licenses creates an uneven playing field because national or regional grocery chains have vastly greater purchasing power, marketing capability, and economies of scale than local package/liquor stores. This committee and law makers should decide once and for all whether stronger protections will be installed to preserve the “Small Business Oriented Economic Environment” in Maryland.
- Independent liquor stores — often family-owned — rely on alcohol sales as the core of their business. Many operate on thin margins and would struggle to compete on price and inventory levels, especially with regard to Quantity Deals, and also when grocery chains can undercut or bundle alcohol with grocery sales.
- A statewide petition opposing similar proposed expansions noted that this policy could “*threaten the livelihood of small, family-owned liquor stores ... force numerous businesses to close*” and harm local economic diversity.

#### 2. Local Jobs, Entrepreneurship & Tax Revenue Concerns

- Closure of small liquor stores would mean not just business losses but the elimination of thousands of jobs — owner, manager, and employee (salaried & hourly wage) positions — that are embedded in Maryland local economies.
- Much of the local economic impact of independent stores is retained within our Maryland community (payroll, local rent, local purchasing) — losses in these sectors will be devastating for our local economies, starting from commercial real estate and not limited to a move away from Entrepreneurship as a career choice.

---

### **III. Public Health and Safety Considerations**

#### **1. Increased Availability & Consumption**

- There is research (cited below) predating this bill showing that expanding alcohol availability (more outlets and easier access) is tied to increases in overall consumption and associated harms — including traffic injuries, violence, and underage access. Increased alcohol outlet density is a known risk factor for public health impacts.
- From a public health perspective, expanding alcohol sales into venues where families regularly shop may inadvertently normalize alcohol consumption and increase impulse purchases, especially where children accompany adults.

#### **2. Undermining Current Regulatory Goals**

- Maryland’s existing regulatory framework (sometimes proudly and with disdain referred to as Archaic) — which limits most alcohol and beer/wine sales to independent package/liquor stores — reflects a longstanding policy choice by Maryland law makers aimed at balancing access with safety, prevention of over-concentration of outlets, and support for small retail entities.
- By broadening Class A eligibility to food retailers with little restriction, the bill removes a key layer of community control aimed at regulated expansion of alcohol outlets.

---

### **IV. Broader Community & Social Concerns**

#### **1. Loss of Local Character and Neighborhood Institutions**

- Independent liquor and package stores often function as community hubs and neighborhood businesses. Their disappearance would diminish local character and reduce retail diversity in Maryland towns, cities, and suburbs.
- The lawmakers present here today will define the future landscape of Maryland communities, and should decide if they see small businesses as significant elements of those vibrant communities!

#### **2. Equity and Small Business Sustainability**

- Economically disadvantaged communities and communities of color may disproportionately bear the brunt of small-business closures, leading to reduced access to locally-owned enterprises and jobs. Respected lawmakers, your vote today may limit access to the most vulnerable communities, please vote wisely!

---

### **V. Conclusion & Request**

For the reasons cited above — **economic harm to small, local businesses, risks to public health and safety, and broader community impact** — I respectfully urge the Committee to **issue an unfavorable report on SB 75 and also take decisive steps to permanently end this annual back and forth on this issue!**

---

## Key Points / Arguments Against SB 75 You Can Use

- ✓ Expanding alcohol sales to food retailers threatens independent liquor stores' viability by exposing them to competition from large grocery chains with far more resources.
- ✓ Increased density of alcohol outlets is associated with greater public health harms, especially in communities already struggling with excessive alcohol use.
- ✓ Maryland's current three-tier system and restriction on alcohol sales outside of package/liquor shops helps manage community risk and supports local business ecosystems.
- ✓ Independent retailers provide jobs, community identity, and personalized service that large chains rarely replace.

## Bibliography

Campbell, C. A., Hahn, R. A., Elder, R., et al. (2009). The effectiveness of limiting alcohol outlet density as a means of reducing excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 37(6), 556–569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2009.09.028> (Community Guide systematic review concluding strong evidence that greater outlet density increases harms.)

Popova, S., Giesbrecht, N., Bekmuradov, D., & Patra, J. (2009). Hours and days of sale and density of alcohol outlets: Impacts on alcohol consumption and damage: A systematic review. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 44(5), 500–516. <https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agp054>

Stockwell, T., Gruenewald, P., Toumbourou, J., & Loxley, W. (Eds.). (2005). *Preventing harmful substance use: The evidence base for policy and practice*. Wiley. (Chapters synthesize international evidence linking outlet density and availability to harm.)

Gruenewald, P. J. (2011). Regulating availability: How access to alcohol affects drinking and problems in youth and adults. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 34(2), 248–256.

Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., et al. (2010). *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and public policy* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. (Authoritative synthesis concluding that availability controls are among the most effective alcohol policies.)

---

## Major Public Health Reports

World Health Organization. (2018). *Global status report on alcohol and health 2018*. WHO Press. (Documents global evidence linking availability to consumption and disease burden.)

World Health Organization. (2010). *Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol*. (Identifies regulating physical availability as a “best buy” intervention.)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Preventing excessive alcohol use: Alcohol outlet density. (Summarizes evidence connecting outlet density with violence, injury, and excessive drinking.)

Community Preventive Services Task Force. (2009). Preventing excessive alcohol consumption: Increasing alcohol taxes and regulating outlet density. (Finds sufficient evidence that greater density increases harms.)

---

## **Landmark Policy & Economics Research**

Wagenaar, A. C., Tobler, A. L., & Komro, K. A. (2010). Effects of alcohol tax and price policies on morbidity and mortality: A systematic review. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(11), 2270–2278. (While focused on price, reinforces availability’s role in consumption patterns.)

Wagenaar, A. C., & Holder, H. D. (1995). Changes in alcohol consumption resulting from the elimination of retail wine monopolies: Results from five U.S. states. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 56*(5), 566–572. (Demonstrates increased consumption following retail privatization.)

Privatization studies in states such as Washington show increases in per-capita spirits consumption and mixed effects on harms following expanded retail access.

---

## **Violence & Community Harm Research**

Livingston, M. (2008). A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and assault. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, 32*(6), 1074–1079. (Shows association between higher outlet density and assault rates.)

Gorman, D. M., Speer, P. W., Gruenewald, P. J., & Labouvie, E. W. (2001). Spatial dynamics of alcohol availability, neighborhood structure, and violent crime. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 62*(5), 628–636.