

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Corey Johnson, Fells Point/Baltimore City

RE: SB0075 — Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers

POSITION: Support

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Corey Johnson and I live in Baltimore City.

I'm writing in support of Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers (SB0075).

This honestly feels less like a controversial policy and more like Maryland catching up to how people already live. Right now, a normal grocery trip often turns into two separate stops — one store for food and another for beer or wine. That's not a public safety issue. It's just an inconvenience created by an outdated law.

Maryland is one of the last states still operating this way. Most of the country has figured out you can allow grocery sales while liquor stores continue to operate successfully. People still go to liquor stores for selection, recommendations, and specialty products. But forcing every resident to make a second trip for basic items doesn't protect small business — it just frustrates families and wastes time.

There's also a real economic side to this.

Grocery stores run on extremely thin margins. Small changes in revenue can be the difference between staying open and closing. When a grocery store closes, a community doesn't just lose a place to buy food — it loses jobs, foot traffic for nearby businesses, and access to fresh food. We already have neighborhoods in Baltimore where residents struggle to get to a full grocery store. We shouldn't be maintaining rules that make operating one harder.

Allowing beer and wine sales gives stores another reliable revenue stream and makes it more attractive to open locations in underserved areas. That's a practical way the legislature can support food access without new spending programs.

This bill also simply reflects how families actually shop. Parents juggling work, school schedules, childcare, and commutes don't benefit from laws that require extra trips for routine purchases. One-stop shopping saves time, reduces driving, and fits modern life.

I also don't believe this eliminates liquor stores. In the 46 states where grocery stores sell beer and wine, independent liquor stores still exist and often do well because they differentiate on service, expertise, and product selection rather than convenience items.

SB0075 is a straightforward modernization of Maryland law that supports consumers, helps grocery stores remain viable, and improves access to food in many communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0075.

Corey Johnson

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