

MD Baltimore County CTG Support Letter 2-20-26 S F

Uploaded by: Emily Smith

Position: FAV



February 20, 2026

Hon. Pamela Beidle, Chair
Hon. Antonio Hayes, Vice-Chair
Maryland Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senators Beidle and Hayes:

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 in the United States in support of SB 72 - Baltimore County - Alcoholic Beverages - Sale for Off-Premises Consumption.

The bill would allow Baltimore County restaurants and bars to sell 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. Maryland is one of only four states to cease cocktails to-go following the pandemic. Meanwhile, **32 states and Washington, D.C. have adopted the practice permanently.**

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-

**Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.
101 Constitution Ave NW, Suite 350W
Washington, DC 20001**

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 SB 72. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or our Maryland counsel, Hannah Garagiola.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Smith".

Emily Smith
Vice President State Public Policy
Emily.Smith@distilledspirits.org
(202) 682-8802

cc: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

MD SB72 Support DIAGEO Feb 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Marta Harting

Position: FAV



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.

SB0075 Support_MJB.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Bates

Position: FAV

February 16th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Michael J. Bates, Baltimore City, Maryland
RE: Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers
POSITION: Support

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee, I am writing to request your support for Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers (SB0075).

Maryland's prohibition of beer and wine sales at local grocery stores is holding our communities back. Our leaders should be doing everything within their power to improve conditions for grocery stores that offer a variety of foods, products and services to Marylanders. Unfortunately, **the existing prohibition makes it harder for grocery stores to operate, especially considering the razor-thin margins that grocery retailers operate at.**

Allowing beer and wine to be sold at grocery stores is one meaningful way legislators can help to prevent grocery store closures while incentivizing the opening of new grocery stores. In communities across Maryland, we have neighborhoods that lack access to grocery stores with fresh food - it is long past time for us to work together to address and solve this problem.

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

Michael J. Bates
133 S. Macon Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

SB72_BaltCountyDelegation_FAV

Uploaded by: Senator Hettleman

Position: FAV

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
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MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D.
CHRIS WEST

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
BALTIMORE COUNTY DELEGATION

February 24, 2026

Chair Pamela Beidle
Finance Committee
3 Miller East Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: SB72

Dear Chair Beidle,

This is to inform you and the Finance Committee that Senate Bill 72 Baltimore County - Alcoholic Beverages - Sale for Off-Premises Consumption, received a **FAVORABLE** vote from the Baltimore County Senate Delegation on February 24th.

The Baltimore County Senate Delegation respectfully requests that the Finance Committee consider its favorable recommendation when voting on this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelly Hettleman".

Shelly Hettleman
Chair, Baltimore County Delegation