

Senate Bill 75 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Antonio Hayes

Position: FAV

ANTONIO HAYES

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Legislative District 40



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 75

Title: *Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers*

Committee: Finance

Sponsor: Senator Antonio Hayes

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Finance Committee.

For the record, I am Senator Antonio Hayes, and I am here to present **Senate Bill 75**. This legislation offers a balanced, market-based solution to two pressing issues in our communities: the need to attract and retain full-service grocery stores in underserved areas, and the need to modernize our alcohol licensing laws while respecting existing small business owners.

Many neighborhoods across Maryland, particularly in Baltimore City, struggle with a lack of access to fresh, healthy food. We know that full-service grocery stores operate on incredibly thin profit margins. In many other states, the sale of beer and wine provides the necessary revenue stream that makes a grocery store financially viable. Maryland's current prohibition on chain stores and supermarkets holding alcohol licenses creates a significant barrier to entry, discouraging high-quality grocers from locating in the communities that need them most.

Senate Bill 75 creates a narrow, carefully defined pathway for a "Food Retailer" to obtain a Class A license to sell beer and wine. To qualify as a Food Retailer, a store must be a substantial establishment (at least 3,200 square feet) that offers a full range of fresh foods—including fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy—and, crucially, must accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits .

This bill is not about flooding the market with new licenses. It includes a unique "purchase first" mechanism designed to protect the equity of existing license holders.

Under SB 75, if a Food Retailer wants to sell alcohol and is located within **3,000 feet** of an existing Class A license holder, they cannot simply apply for a new license. Instead, they must first **offer to purchase the existing license** from that nearby holder at **fair market value**.

- This allows existing small business owners the opportunity to sell their assets for a fair price.
- If the parties cannot agree on a price, the bill provides standing for judicial review to determine fair market value .

Only if the existing license holder *rejects* the offer does the Food Retailer have the right to apply to the local licensing board for a new license .

It is important to note that even if a Food Retailer purchases a full beer, wine, and liquor license, this bill restricts them to selling **only beer and wine** . This ensures that we are supporting the grocery model without expanding the sale of hard liquor in our neighborhoods.

SB 75 creates a presumption that bringing a full-service grocery store into a community is in the best interest of that community. By passing this bill, we can provide a vital economic incentive for grocers to invest in Maryland while treating existing liquor store owners fairly.

This Act will take effect on July 1, 2026. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 75.

Position: Favorable

MRA Beer and Wine Study - Executive Summary[1].pdf

Uploaded by: cailey locklair

Position: FAV

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BEER AND WINE SALES IN GROCERY STORES

February 2026



**UNIVERSITY OF
BALTIMORE**

Jacob France Institute

Executive Summary

The Jacob France Institute of the University of Baltimore (JFI) was retained by Maryland Retailers Alliance to update and expand the 2024 *The Potential Benefits of Allowing Beer and Wine Sales In Supermarkets, Grocery, and Convenience Stores in Maryland* report. The JFI provided a revised economic and fiscal impact analysis; a more detailed analysis on the experience of the four states that have allowed beer and wine sales in grocery stores, and a case study analysis of the potential impact of allowing beer and wine sales in supermarkets and grocery stores on expanding food retailing in underserved markets. Selected key findings of this analysis are as follows:

Maryland Alcohol Market

- Maryland has restrictive laws on the sale and distribution of beer and wine. Maryland is one of only 5 states that does not allow the sale of any alcohol in grocery stores: with 7 states allowing beer sales, 18 states allowing beer and wine sales, and 21 states allowing beer, wine and spirits sales.
- Despite being a high-income state, alcohol consumption in Maryland is below the national average and declining.
- Maryland has competitive beer and wine prices, but relatively high taxes.
- The sale of beer and wine in Maryland is nearly entirely concentrated in Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers. Maryland has 1,531 Class “A” Liquor License holders¹ and 1,214 Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers. Maryland’s 1,214 Beer, Wine, and Liquor retailers employ a total of 5,695 employees, generate an estimated \$2.5 billion in sales, and Maryland has a concentration of employment 70% higher than the national average in this sector. While the number of Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers establishments has been stable, employment in the Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers sector has declined over the past five years.
- Alcohol sales are an important source of State government revenues, generating \$39.9 million in excise tax revenues and the 3% additional sales tax on alcohol (above the State sales tax of 6%) generating an additional \$34.3 million.

Economic and Business Impact of Allowing Beer and Wine Sales in Grocery Stores

- ***The impact of permitting beer and wine sales in grocery stores on existing beer, wine, and liquor retailers may be overstated.*** A key concern over allowing beer and wine sales at Maryland grocery stores is its potential impact on existing beer, wine, and liquor retailers. In the last decade, four states have allowed beer and wine sales at grocery stores: Pennsylvania and Tennessee in 2016, Oklahoma in 2018 and Colorado in 2023. The experience of the three states where long-term data are available demonstrates that while there are immediate impacts on existing retailers, employment in beer, wine, and liquor retailers fully recovered and began to grow in all three states and the number of establishments is now above pre-liberalization levels in two of the three states (Pennsylvania and Tennessee), with the number of establishments in Oklahoma recovering in 2022 and 2023, but falling to below pre-change levels in 2024. Alcohol sales tax revenues increased in all of the four states analyzed, indicating that permitting sales in grocery store contributed to an increase in beer, wine and alcohol sales.
- The JFI estimates that permitting beer and wine sales in grocery stores will support an increase in beer and wine sales in Maryland, with the JFI estimating an increase in sales volume of between 5%

¹ Does not include Class “D” Licenses that are permitted to sell alcohol for on- and off-premises consumption.

and 7%. Beer and wine sales are estimated to increase on the basis of the combined effects of the expanded access and a reduction in out-of-state purchases by Maryland residents resulting from permitting sales in grocery stores.

- ***The JFI estimates that allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores will increase economic activity in Maryland.*** The economic impact estimates (net of the impact on existing retailers) are as follows:
 - If beer and wine sales increase by 5%, economic activity in Maryland will increase by \$29.1 million, supporting a gain of 234 jobs earning \$11.1 million in Labor Income.
 - If beer and wine sales increase by 6%, economic activity in Maryland will increase by \$34.9 million, supporting a gain of 281 jobs earning \$13.3 million in Labor Income.
 - If beer and wine sales increase by 7%, economic activity in Maryland will increase by \$40.7 million, supporting a gain of 328 jobs earning \$15.5 million in Labor Income.
- ***The JFI estimates that allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores will increase State government revenues in Maryland,*** with a 5% increase in beer and wine sales generating \$4.4 million in estimated State government revenues; a 6% increase in beer and wine sales generating \$5.3 million in estimated State government revenues; and 7% increase in beer and wine sales generating \$6.2 million in estimated State government revenues.
- ***The impact of allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores on existing beer, wine, and liquor retailers is likely to be real but manageable and, based on the experience of other states, can be expected to recover over time.*** The JFI estimates a net loss of 83 jobs in existing beer, wine, and liquor retailers with a 5% increase in sales; 99 jobs with a 6% increase; and 116 jobs with a 7% increase. It is not possible to accurately estimate the number of existing beer, wine, and liquor retailers that will be adversely impacted by allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores but based on various estimation methodologies the loss in establishments would range from 11 to 25 establishments ranging from 1% to 2% of existing establishments.
 - It is important to note that the employment in Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers in Maryland is already in decline, with the number of jobs in Maryland falling from a high of 6,060 in 2016, to 5,916 in 2019 to 5,695 in 2024, with the number of Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers establishments remaining stable at about 1,200 – with the number of establishments increasing by just 19 over the past five years (from 1,195 in 2019 to 1,214 in 2024).
 - These estimates are in line with the experience of other States that have allowed beer and wine sales in grocery stores, with: Colorado experiencing a 2% decline in Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers establishments and an 8% decline in employment in the first two years after the change; Oklahoma experiencing a 3% decline in establishments but a 1% increase in employment; Pennsylvania experiencing a 3% increase in establishments and 2% growth in employment; Tennessee experiencing a 6% increase in establishments and 1% decline in employment. ***In all of the three states where long term data was available, Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers employment in 2024 was above pre-liberalization levels indicating that while impacts can be expected, the Beer, Wine, and Liquor Retailers sector can be expected to recover.***
 - In addition to creating jobs and generating tax revenues, allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores has the potential to support growth in Maryland's emerging microbrewing and wine production industries.

Corey Johnson SB0075 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Corey Johnson

Position: FAV

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

1727 Aliceanna St

Baltimore, MD 21231

SB0075- Favorable-Corinne Scheitler (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Corinne Scheitler

Position: FAV

February 18th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Corinne Dallain Scheitler

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 express my strong support for Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers (SB0075) and to respectfully ask for your favorable consideration.

I recently relocated to Maryland and have been proud to call this state my new home. However, one adjustment has genuinely surprised me: the inability to purchase beer and wine at a grocery store. In every place I have previously lived, this was simply part of a routine shopping trip — nothing more remarkable than picking up milk or bread.

The practical inconvenience is real. Working families and busy individuals already have limited time. Requiring a separate stop at a liquor store to complete what should be a single errand is a friction that most other states have long since eliminated. As someone new to Maryland, it is one of the few aspects of daily life here that feels like a step backward rather than forward.

I also want to acknowledge the concern that this change could harm independent liquor stores. Based on my experience in other states where grocery wine and beer sales are permitted, those businesses continue to thrive by offering something grocery stores cannot — expertise, curated selections, and personalized service. The customers who value that experience do not disappear simply because a grocery store carries a six-pack.

I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0075. This is a commonsense modernization that would make Maryland a more welcoming and practical place to live — something that matters a great deal to those of us who have just arrived.

Thank you,
Corinne Dallain Scheitler
1717 Landcaster Street
Baltimore MD, 21231

SB0075 - FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: James Peak

Position: FAV

SB0075

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: James Reece Peak III, Baltimore County

RE: Senate Bill 75 – Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 17, 2026

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

I am writing to urge a *favorable* report on **Senate Bill 75**. Maryland is currently one of only four states that still prohibit grocery stores from selling beer and wine—an outdated policy that nearly 80% of Marylanders want to change. Allowing "one-stop shopping" is a commonsense modernization that respects the busy schedules of Maryland families by saving time and reducing unnecessary travel.

Beyond convenience, this bill is vital for the economic health of our communities. Grocery stores operate on razor-thin margins, and allowing beer and wine sales provides a critical revenue stream that can prevent store closures, particularly in rural and underserved "food deserts." By strengthening these essential community anchors, we ensure more Marylanders have reliable access to fresh food and local jobs.

Experience in 46 other states demonstrates that grocery stores and independent liquor stores can thrive together. SB0075 simply brings Maryland in line with the rest of the country while prioritizing consumer choice and economic stability. For these reasons, I respectfully request a *favorable* report on **SB0075**.

Sincerely,

James Reece Peak III

12212 Cleghorn Rd Cockeysville, MD 21030

SB 75- Jonathan Sandoval- Supportive .pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathan Sadaval

Position: FAV

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Jonathan Sandoval, Fulton, MD (Howard County)

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).

Grocery stores are economic anchors in our communities across Maryland. They create local jobs, generate tax revenue, support nearby small businesses, and increase access to fresh food. When a grocery store closes, the economic and social ripple effects can be devastating. This is particularly true for working-class neighborhoods and rural areas.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine is a sensible way to make it easier for them to operate and remain viable. At the same time, experience in the 46 states where this is already permitted demonstrates that independently owned liquor stores can continue to thrive by offering curated selections, knowledgeable service, and unique products. The convenience for grocers to sell beer and wine is meaningful for young families like mine with limited time to run errands and ensure all of my families weekday and weekend needs are met. I still plan to visit my local liquor store like Fulton Liquors because I want to support local business owners who provide me with one of the best curated bourbon selections in my area. That business is not going away with grocer sales!

This legislation supports economic growth without eliminating opportunity for existing retailers, which is why I enthusiastically request a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Thank you,

Jonathan Sandoval

8524 Reservoir Rd.

Fulton, MD 20759

SB0075- Favorable- Jonathon Rowland.pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathon Rowland

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Jonathon Rowland, Baltimore City

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 on beer and wine sales 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 incentivising 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.

This is also a critical consumer convenience issue. Marylanders should enjoy the same convenience that 46 other states currently enjoy by having beer and wine sales in grocery stores.

Please support Senate Bill 75.

-Jonathon Rowland

525 S Bond St Baltimore MD 21231

Kate Simms Written Testimony_ Support SB 75.pdf

Uploaded by: Kate Simms

Position: FAV

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Kate Simms, Baltimore

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).

Grocery stores are economic anchors in our communities across Maryland. They create local jobs, generate tax revenue, support nearby small businesses, and increase access to fresh food. When a grocery store closes, the economic and social ripple effects can be devastating. This is particularly true for working-class neighborhoods and rural areas.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine is a sensible way to make it easier for them to operate and remain viable. At the same time, experience in the 46 states where this is already permitted demonstrates that independently owned liquor stores can continue to thrive by offering curated selections, knowledgeable service, and unique products.

This legislation supports economic growth without eliminating opportunity for existing retailers, which is why I enthusiastically request a favorable report on **SB0075**.

In addition, attached to this testimony is a community letter that was recently sent to Senate President Bill Ferguson, signed by over 70 Baltimore-area community leaders, requesting support for SB 0075.

Thank you,

Kate Simms

1630 Lancaster St, Baltimore MD 21231

Kate Simms
1630 Lancaster St
Baltimore, MD 21231
o/b/o Baltimore Community Leaders

February 9, 2026

Senate President Bill Ferguson
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re. Community support for SB75: Beer and wine sales in grocery stores

President Ferguson:

We, the undersigned Baltimore City community leaders & members, respectfully urge you to support Senate Bill 75 sponsored by Senator Antonio Hayes, which allows beer and wine sales in grocery stores.

Maryland remains one of only a few states that prohibits grocery stores from selling beer and wine—an outdated restriction that no longer reflects how residents shop or live. These laws create unnecessary inconvenience for consumers, forcing separate trips for everyday purchases that are combined in most other states.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine would provide greater convenience for Maryland families while supporting local retailers and their workers. Grocery stores already operate under strict regulations and have extensive experience with age verification and responsible sales. Modernizing the law would bring Maryland in line with national norms while maintaining strong safeguards.

Public polling and community engagement consistently show broad support for this change. Marylanders want updated laws that reflect today's realities, promote consumer choice, and encourage grocery retail investment across Maryland.

We respectfully ask you to support legislation that allows grocery stores to sell beer and wine and helps move Maryland's alcohol laws into the modern era. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to our community.

Sincerely,

Janet Allen
Heritage Crossing
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Baltimore, MD 21201

Lauren Baranyay
Fells Point
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Michael Bates
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Matthew Bleakney

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Harold Dams

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Emma Dams

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Liam Davis

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Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Sr.

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Fell's Point
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Locchanan Sreeharikesan

Kenilworth Park
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Alexus Martin

Ridgleys Delight
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Micah Morris

Roland Park
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Brian O'Connor

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Kenneth Rebella

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Shannon Bishoff

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cc: Delegate Luke Clippinger
Delegate Robbyn Lewis
Delegate Mark Edelson

Update - Senate Finance Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Katie Callaway

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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 incentivising 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**.

Name

Address

SB0075

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

As you consider updates to Maryland's alcohol laws, I urge you to support SB0075, that would allow beer and wine sales in local grocery stores. Maryland families already juggle work, school, caregiving, and countless responsibilities. Forcing residents to make separate trips for beer or wine is an unnecessary inconvenience that most other Americans do not face.

Maryland is one of only four states that still prohibit grocery stores from selling beer and wine. Recent polling indicates that nearly 80% of Marylanders support changing this policy because it simply makes shopping easier and more efficient. One-stop shopping saves time, reduces travel, and better reflects the realities of modern family life.

This commonsense reform would bring our state in line with the vast majority of the country and improve everyday life for Marylanders. I respectfully ask for your support.

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

Name

Address

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

As one of only four states that prohibit grocery stores from selling beer and wine, Maryland is maintaining a restriction that no longer reflects today's retail environment. Grocery stores face intense competition and extremely tight operating margins. Allowing them to sell beer and wine would provide an important revenue stream that could help stabilize existing stores and encourage new investment in localities across Maryland.

This issue is especially important in rural communities and underserved areas, where grocery store closures can leave residents with limited access to fresh food and essential goods. By modernizing our licensing structure, we can support the long-term viability of food retailers and improve access to fresh food options for the numerous neighborhoods, towns and localities that make up our state.

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

Name

Address

SB0075

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

Grocery stores are economic anchors in our communities across Maryland. They create local jobs, generate tax revenue, support nearby small businesses, and increase access to fresh food. When a grocery store closes, the economic and social ripple effects can be devastating. This is particularly true for working-class neighborhoods and rural areas.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine is a sensible way to make it easier for them to operate and remain viable. At the same time, experience in the 46 states where this is already permitted demonstrates that independently owned liquor stores can continue to thrive by offering curated selections, knowledgeable service, and unique products.

This legislation supports economic growth without eliminating opportunity for existing retailers, which is why I enthusiastically request a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Name

Address

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

Convenience matters. When residents can complete their grocery shopping in a single trip, they save valuable time that can be spent with family, at work, or in their communities. Maryland's current prohibition creates unnecessary inconvenience and no longer reflects the realities of modern life.

Allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores would not eliminate independent liquor stores, which can continue to distinguish themselves through selection and service. Instead, it would simply give consumers more flexibility and reduce redundant errands.

This commonsense reform prioritizes efficiency, consumer choice, and practicality which is why I am formally requesting a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Name

Address

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

For Marylanders, time is one of our most limited resources. Between work schedules, school activities, and caregiving responsibilities, efficiency matters. Requiring residents to make a separate trip to purchase beer or wine adds unnecessary inconvenience to an already busy calendar.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine would create a true one-stop shopping experience. Marylanders would be joining residents from 46 other states across the nation should they be allowed to complete their weekly shopping in a single visit, reducing travel time, traffic congestion, and fuel costs. This simple modernization would make daily life more manageable for thousands of Marylanders.

Again, most states already permit this convenience. It is time for Maryland to align with modern consumer expectations and eliminate an outdated barrier that complicates routine errands.

For these reasons I am formally requesting a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Name

Address

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: [Name, Neighborhood / County]

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).

In many rural and underserved communities, residents must travel significant distances for basic necessities. Requiring an additional stop at a separate store to purchase beer or wine creates extra travel time and added inconvenience, particularly for seniors and working families.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine would simplify errands and reduce unnecessary trips. This reform would be especially impactful in areas where store options are limited and transportation may be a challenge.

Updating this policy would demonstrate a commitment to practical, commonsense governance by removing barriers that complicate daily life without providing meaningful public benefit.

For these reasons I am formally requesting a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Name

Address

UFCW 400 Favorable Written Testimony for SB0075 -

Uploaded by: Kayla Mock

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of SB0075

Alcoholic Beverages – Class A Licenses – Food Retailers

February 18, 2026

To: Honorable Chair Pamela Beidle, Vice Chair Antonio Hayes, and members of the Senate
Finance Committee

From: Kayla Mock, Political & Legislative Director

United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 400

Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Matters Committee, I appreciate the chance to share my testimony on behalf of our over 10,000 members in Maryland, working in grocery, retail, food distribution, cannabis, and health care. Through collective bargaining, our members raise the workplace standards of wages, benefits, safety, and retirement for all workers. Union members are critical to addressing inequality and uplifting the middle class.

Our members are the hardworking men and women who keep Maryland’s grocery stores running, ensuring families have access to fresh food and essential goods.

We support SB0075 and urge you to vote it favorably.

This legislation is not just about convenience for consumers — it is about **creating and preserving good jobs, generating much-needed state revenue, and modernizing our outdated laws.**

Passing this bill will:

1. **Generate \$32 Million in New Revenue Without Raising Taxes** – At a time when Maryland is facing significant budget challenges, this legislation provides an opportunity to add **\$32 million in new state revenue** without imposing any new taxes on residents. This is a win-win solution that benefits both workers and taxpayers.

2. **Strengthen Union Jobs & Economic Growth** – Allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores will expand employment opportunities, increase work hours, and provide better wages and benefits for thousands of union grocery workers across the state.

3. **Enhance Consumer Convenience** – Maryland is one of the few remaining states that does not allow grocery stores to sell beer and wine. This legislation will give residents the same convenience that consumers in most other states already enjoy. In fact, **polls show that three out of four Maryland consumers support this change.** It's time for our laws to catch up with consumer demand.

4. **Ensure Safe & Responsible Alcohol Sales** – Grocery stores already follow strict ID verification procedures for products like tobacco and lottery tickets. Many major retailers successfully sell alcohol in other states while adhering to strong responsible sales practices. Maryland grocers are prepared to do the same.

Maryland needs revenue, Maryland consumers want convenience, and Maryland businesses deserve the opportunity to grow and thrive. This legislation accomplishes all three. I urge the committee to give it favorable consideration.

We urge a favorable report on SB0075.

SB0075- Supportive- Kenneth Rebella .pdf

Uploaded by: Kenneth Rebella

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 18th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Kenneth Rebella, Baltimore City

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).

As you consider updates to Maryland's alcohol laws, I urge you to support SB0075, that would allow beer and wine sales in local grocery stores. Maryland families already juggle work, school, caregiving, and countless responsibilities. Forcing residents to make separate trips for beer or wine is an unnecessary inconvenience that most other Americans do not face.

Maryland is one of only four states that still prohibit grocery stores from selling beer and wine. Recent polling indicates that nearly 80% of Marylanders support changing this policy because it simply makes shopping easier and more efficient. One-stop shopping saves time, reduces travel, and better reflects the realities of modern family life.

This commonsense reform would bring our state in line with the vast majority of the country and improve everyday life for Marylanders. I respectfully ask for your support for Senate Bill 75.

Thank you,

Kenneth Rebella

110 Elmwood Rd Baltimore MD 21202

SB0075.pdf

Uploaded by: Kristin Hogle

Position: FAV

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of legislation that would allow the sale of beer and wine in local Maryland grocery stores.

Maryland consumers deserve the same convenience and modern retail options that residents in most other states already enjoy. Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine would provide greater accessibility for busy families, working professionals, and seniors who rely on one-stop shopping to manage their daily responsibilities efficiently.

This change would also strengthen Maryland's economy. Expanding beer and wine sales into grocery stores would create jobs, increase state and local tax revenues, and generate new opportunities for Maryland-based breweries and wineries to reach a broader customer base. It would encourage competition while supporting local producers and expanding consumer choice.

Importantly, grocery stores are already highly regulated environments with strict age-verification procedures in place for other restricted products. With appropriate safeguards, training requirements, and compliance standards, beer and wine sales can be implemented responsibly and safely.

Modernizing Maryland's alcohol retail laws reflects current consumer expectations while maintaining strong regulatory oversight. I respectfully urge you to support legislation that allows beer and wine sales in grocery stores across the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristin Hogle

Senate Finance Written Testimony_SB0075.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Sigwart

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 18th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Lauren P. Sigwart, Southgate/Anne Arundel County

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).

Thank you for taking the time to consider this bill.

I'm writing as a Maryland resident who wants the ability to buy beer and wine at the same place I buy groceries. In most states, this is normal and uncontroversial. In Maryland, it still requires a separate trip — and often, for those who live near state lines, that means driving into Virginia or Delaware to do it.

That's not just inconvenient — it means Maryland businesses lose sales and Maryland loses tax revenue.

This issue isn't about expanding access irresponsibly. It's about modernizing a system that feels outdated. Grocery stores already check IDs. They already operate under strict compliance standards. They already manage regulated products. There's no reason beer and wine can't be handled with the same care and oversight.

There's also a broader economic impact to consider. Grocery stores operate on very thin margins. Allowing beer and wine sales would give them an additional revenue stream that can help stabilize stores that might otherwise struggle or close. In communities already facing limited grocery options, that matters. Stronger store performance can mean fewer closures and more incentive for new grocery stores to open in underserved areas. If we want to support food access and keep full-

service grocery stores in Maryland communities, this is a practical step in that direction.

For working families, busy parents, seniors, and anyone juggling a full schedule, having to make multiple stops for basic purchases just doesn't make sense anymore. Allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores would make everyday life a little simpler while supporting Maryland businesses.

I also understand that local liquor stores are an important part of many communities. This change should be implemented thoughtfully and fairly. But maintaining outdated restrictions that push customers — and revenue — across state lines doesn't ultimately protect Maryland's long-term economic health.

Maryland is innovative in so many ways. Updating our alcohol laws to match the majority of the country feels like a practical, common-sense step forward.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you support this bill and give it a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Lauren P. Sigwart

367 Majesty Gln
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

SB0075 - LFD.pdf

Uploaded by: Liam Davis

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 18th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Liam Davis, Greektown, Baltimore City

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).

Convenience matters. When residents can complete their grocery shopping in a single trip, they save valuable time that can be spent with family, at work, or in their communities. Maryland's current prohibition creates unnecessary inconvenience and no longer reflects the realities of modern life.

Allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores would not eliminate independent liquor stores, which can continue to distinguish themselves through selection and service. Instead, it would simply give consumers more flexibility and reduce redundant errands.

This commonsense reform prioritizes efficiency, consumer choice, and practicality which is why I am formally requesting a favorable report on **SB0075**.

Sincerely,

Liam Davis

345 South Lehigh Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

SB0075- Favorable- Mario Marzette (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Mario Marzette

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Mario Marzette, Baltimore 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).

Convenience matters. When residents can complete their grocery shopping in a single trip, they save valuable time that can be spent with family, at work, or in their communities. Maryland's current prohibition creates unnecessary inconvenience and no longer reflects the realities of modern life.

As someone who recently moved to Maryland, I was shocked that this antiquated law was still in effect. I have enjoyed most of my adult life being able to purchase beer and wine at grocery stores and would very much like to be able to do so here in Maryland as well.

In addition, allowing beer and wine sales in grocery stores would not eliminate independent liquor stores, which can continue to distinguish themselves through selection and service. Instead, it would simply give consumers more flexibility and reduce redundant errands.

This commonsense reform prioritizes efficiency, consumer choice, and practicality which is why I am formally requesting a favorable report on **SB0075**.

-Mario Marzette

526 S Bond St Baltimore, MD 21231

SB0075- Supportive- Micah Morris (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Micah Morris

Position: FAV

February 18th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Micah Morris, Baltimore City

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 express my support for Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers (SB0075) and to respectfully ask for your favorable consideration.

Maryland families are already stretched thin. Between work, school, caregiving, and the endless demands of daily life, the last thing anyone needs is an unnecessary extra errand. Yet Maryland remains one of only four states that still prevents residents from picking up beer or wine at their local grocery store — an outdated restriction that the vast majority of Americans simply do not deal with.

The numbers speak for themselves. Nearly 80% of Marylanders support allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine because they understand what this change means in practical terms — less time driving around, fewer stops, and a shopping experience that actually fits the rhythm of modern family life.

This is not a radical change. It is a straightforward update that brings Maryland in line with 46 other states and reflects the common sense values of the people we are asking you to represent. It makes everyday life a little more manageable for working families across our state.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and issue a favorable report on SB0075.

Best Regards,

Micah Morris

110 Elmwood Rd

Baltimore, MD 21210

SB0075 - Senate Finance Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Paris Bienert

Position: FAV

SB0075

February 18, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Paris Bienert, Baltimore City

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).

As you consider updates to Maryland's alcohol laws, I urge you to support SB0075, that would allow beer and wine sales in local grocery stores. Maryland families already juggle work, school, caregiving, and countless responsibilities. Forcing residents to make separate trips for beer or wine is an unnecessary inconvenience that most other Americans do not face.

Maryland is one of only four states that still prohibit grocery stores from selling beer and wine. Recent polling indicates that nearly 80% of Marylanders support changing this policy because it simply makes shopping easier and more efficient. One-stop shopping saves time, reduces travel, and better reflects the realities of modern family life.

This commonsense reform would bring our state in line with the vast majority of the country and improve everyday life for Marylanders. I respectfully ask for your support.

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

Paris Bienert

100 West University Parkway

Baltimore, MD 21210

SB0075- Favorable-Peter Bodde (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Peter Bodde

Position: FAV

February 17th, 2026

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Peter Bodde Baltimore 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 express my strong support for Senate Bill 75 - Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers (SB0075) and to respectfully ask for your favorable consideration.

Convenience is something every Maryland resident deserves. The ability to pick up beer and wine during a routine grocery run saves time that families and working individuals simply cannot afford to waste. Maryland's current restriction feels out of step with the realities of everyday modern life.

I have lived in several different parts of the country where purchasing beer and wine at the grocery store was an unremarkable convenience — one I would very much like to enjoy here as well.

It is also worth noting that this change would not spell the end for independent liquor stores. These businesses have and will continue to set themselves apart through personalized service, expert knowledge, and carefully curated selections. This legislation simply gives consumers greater flexibility and eliminates an unnecessary extra errand.

This is a commonsense reform that puts efficiency, practicality, and consumer choice first — which is why I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0075.

Thank you,

Peter Bodde

1605 Aliceanna St

Baltimore MD 21231

SB 75 High's of Baltimore.pdf

Uploaded by: John Phelps Jr

Position: FWA

Greetings,

My name is John Phelps Jr and I am with High's of Baltimore and Carroll Motor Fuels. Carroll Fuel is a 4th generation family business based in Maryland since 1907 and High's has been serving Maryland communities since 1928 and we have hundreds of locations throughout Maryland and employee over 700 people in Maryland. I am writing today to ask you to support the following:

SB 75 Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers – Authorizing a food retailer to offer to purchase a Class A license holder under certain circumstances; and authorizing a food retailer to apply to a local licensing board for a Class A license under certain circumstances.

SB 75 would allow us to continue to meet the needs of our customers. For years, customers have asked why we are unable to carry alcoholic beverages that they are able to buy from convenience stores in most other states. We are hoping for the opportunity to have a fair chance to be able to offer these products. We already sell age restricted products and comply with both state and local licensing requirements.

Over the years, our industry has dealt with a variety of cost increases, including hirer employment costs, tobacco and nicotine tax increases, and a much higher cost just to do business. This has caused us to have to adapt over time and make sure we continue to cater to the needs of the local communities we serve, whether that is an enhanced food service offer, or an expanded selection of grocery offer and first aid products.

Being able to have a chance to expand our offering to meet the needs of our customers would greatly benefit our ability to continue to serve the communities we operate in by providing the goods and service our customers ask for and helping support organizations like the Forest Park Recreational Council and the Johns Hopkins Children Center.

Thank you for considering our thoughts and if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

SB 75 – Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Fo

Uploaded by: Julian Wills

Position: FWA



RE: SB 75 – Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Julian (Blackie) Wills and I am the President and CEO for Dash In Convenience Stores, a Maryland-based company with 40 outlets in the state employing about 800 between these outlets. We are owned by The Wills Group, Inc., a Maryland-based company founded over 100 years ago and I am part of the fourth generation of family leadership for the organization. We have community-based values and donate over \$1.2 million annually to our charitable partners including various regional food banks.

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 75 with the following amendment:

- Removal of the minimum square footage requirement of 3,200 SF. There are Food Retailers that can meet the requirements of selling Food from five of the categories listed in the bill that are a smaller footprint than the 3,200 SF requirement. Any retailer that meets the requirements should be eligible for the Class A license.

Thank you for your consideration to remove the square footage requirement from the bill.

Sincerely,

Julian (Blackie) Wills III
President & CEO
443.532.5222
jbwills@willsgroup.com

SB75 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Kirk McCauley

Position: FWA



WMDA/CAR Service Station
and Automotive Repair Association

Chair: Pamela Beidle and members of Senate Finance

RE: SB 75

Position: Favorable with Amendments

My name is Kirk McCauley, my employer is WMDA/CAR, we represent service stations, convenience stores, and repair facilities across the state as a non-profit trade group established in 1937.

WMDA is in favor with an amendment - "Remove Retailers Square Footage Requirement from SB75 Page 3 line 3"- Retailing beer and wine should not be a monopoly exclusive to current liquor retailers nor to grocery stores because they have over 3200 square feet. Small business is what drives our economy, it makes no sense to exclude those retailers, should they choose to meet all other requirements of SB75.

I also will argue that this bill, amended, has potential to help those areas that are underserved by large retailers. SB75 requires retailers to carry 5 of 6 food items and accept SNAP credits as payment. Convenience retailers would have the opportunity to better serve their communities/customers and keep business and jobs local.

Counties that allow beer and wine sales in small retail locations do so without problems. Sales of beer and wine by convenient retailers do not pose a problem and amending this bill with other requirements intact would benefit consumers and retailers.

WMDA/CAR asks for Favorable Report with Amendment Requested on SB75

Any questions, contact to Kirk McCauley, 301-775-0221 or kmccauley@wmdacar.com

SB75_MAPDA_fwa (2026).pdf

Uploaded by: Mike O'Halloran

Position: FWA



Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Distributors Association
P.O. Box 711 ★ Annapolis, MD 21404
410-693-2226 ★ www.mapda.com

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Distributors Association

DATE: February 20, 2026

RE: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT – SENATE BILL 75** – Alcoholic Beverages – Class A License – Food Retailers

On behalf of Maryland’s convenience store marketers and energy distributors, MAPDA urges the committee to issue a favorable committee report on SB75 with the amendment described below.

Simply, this legislation would allow a “food retailer” as defined in the bill to obtain a Class A license to sell beer and/or wine.

As the legislature continues considering the idea of expanding the ability of retailers like convenience stores to sell beer and wine, our industry only asks for the opportunity to compete for these licenses. Our stores serve thousands of customers each day to meet their daily needs – fuel, coffee, snacks, fresh food, and other items including many stores which meet the needs of SNAP recipients.

Allowing these retailers to sell beer and wine, if they choose, is a simple matter of fairness. Many of our stores serve as the primary grocer in their communities. Passing SB75 allows them to add a new source of revenue so they can expand their offerings, provide better service, and raise wages and benefits of their employees.

Should the committee choose to move forward with the legislation, we ask the square footage requirement on Page 3, Line 3 be amended to 2,000 square feet. This important change would allow for legacy locations to compete for a Class A license. The other requirements – food product offerings, SNAP program participation, and distancing requirements – would remain.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge the Senate Finance Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT COMMITTEE REPORT on SB75**.

Feeding and fueling the economy through gas, coffee, food, heating oil and propane.

MAPDA is an association of convenience stores and energy distributors in Maryland, Delaware & the District of Columbia.

Testimony in Opposition to SB 75 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Amrish Vyas

Position: UNF

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.

MD Beer and Wine in Grocery Stores Opposition Lett

Uploaded by: Emily Smith

Position: UNF



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 opposition SB 75, which would allow a food retailer to purchase or receive a license to sell beer and wine. We oppose this legislation on the basis that it would expand retail access for only beer and wine products thereby creating an unlevel playing field that leaves spirits products at a competitive disadvantage.

Allowing grocery stores to sell beer and wine will negatively impact the sales of spirits and thus the local businesses that produce and sell spirits, as well as Maryland spirits consumers. SB 75 would allow grocery stores to purchase a nearby package store license, but then only sell beer and wine, which would reduce the number of outlets selling distilled spirits outright. In doing so, it would punish Maryland spirits consumers and businesses, including the wholesalers servicing those retail outlets and the roughly 35 Maryland distillers who rely on package stores to sell their products.

Additionally, under SB 75, if a package store declines to sell its license to a grocery store, the grocery store is afforded a process that is skewed in the grocer's favor to receive a beer and wine license anyway. The process provided relieves grocers of the burden to show that granting the license is in the community interest; limits the ability of a retailer to receive full value for its license because a license acquired by a grocer would be limited to beer and wine sales only; and overrides the local community, depriving it from the opportunity to determine whether it is in the community interest to issue a license to a particular grocer or grocers. This process lacks fairness and any justifiable policy basis.

Expanding retail access for beer and wine to grocery stores would take consumers out of retail package stores. As foot traffic in Maryland package stores is reduced, fewer people will

Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.
101 Constitution Ave NW, Suite 350W
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purchase spirits when they can easily buy beer and wine in grocery stores. Between lost sales across all categories, the average package store would lose a substantial portion of their total annual revenue.

In Tennessee, which allowed wine in grocery stores in 2016, package stores sales went down over 9%, spirits volumes declined approximately 4.5% lower than they otherwise would have been and the state lost roughly \$3.6 million in tax revenue. We project Maryland would realize similar if not even more significant negative effects because the spirits excise tax rate is so much higher than the wine and beer tax rates (\$5.03/gallon for spirits versus only \$1.48/gallon for wine and \$0.55/gallon for beer) and because beer access would also be expanded under the bill. In short, any policy that favors beer and wine over spirits is simply not a good business proposition for the Maryland Treasury.

We believe Maryland consumers deserve convenient access to their beverage alcohol products of choice equally, whether it is beer, wine, or spirits. Discriminating between or among spirits and wine or beer does not make good public policy. It is a scientific fact that “alcohol is alcohol” regardless of the form in which it is consumed. According to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a “drink-equivalent” is defined as 1.5 fluid ounces of distilled spirits (40 percent alcohol), 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (5 percent alcohol), or five fluid ounces of wine (12 percent alcohol). In these serving sizes, one drink, whether spirits, beer or wine, contains 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol.

We strongly urge the Committee not to advance SB 75 which tilts Maryland’s marketplace strongly in favor of beer and wine products to the detriment of distilled spirits consumers, retailers, distributors, and distillers. As you are considering any reforms to the alcohol marketplace, we urge you to support policies that will provide a fair marketplace and give consumers convenience without picking economic winners and losers.

We appreciate your consideration of our views. Should you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me or our Maryland counsel Hannah Garagiola.

Sincerely,



Emily Smith
Vice President State Public Policy
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cc: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

Finance Committee Testimony - 2-18-26.pdf

Uploaded by: JoAnne Huey

Position: UNF

February 18, 2026

JoAnne Huey
Worker-Owner
The Wine Source
3601 Elm Ave
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UNFAVORABLE - SB 75 - ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES - CLASS A LICENSE - FOOD RETAILERS

Dear Chair Beidle and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill 75 (SB 75), on behalf of The Wine Source, an independent specialty retailer based in Baltimore. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony for the record representing our employees and worker-owners.

Founded more than 30 years ago in Hampden, The Wine Source has grown into a destination for wine, beer, spirits, gourmet foods, and education. In 2024, the longtime owner sold the business to a group of employees to ensure that the company would remain locally rooted and community governed. We then transitioned The Wine Source into a Worker-Owned Cooperative where today, we employ 42 staff members, 10 of whom are worker-owners. Most of our employees depend on the continued strength of this business to support their families, earn income while pursuing their education, and build long-term careers.

As a cooperative, we intentionally operate differently from corporate chains. We provide wages that exceed industry standards, offer meaningful employee benefits, invest in professional development and reinvest profits locally rather than distributing them to out-of-state shareholders. Our model depends on stable revenue in core categories such as beer and wine. If routine volume migrates to large grocery chains, it directly affects our ability to retain staff at competitive wages and provide generous benefits.

For that reason, we respectfully urge the Committee to look beyond the framing of this bill as a matter of “consumer convenience” and consider its long-term structural impact on Maryland’s independent retail ecosystem. We do not believe Maryland is “out of step”. Rather, Maryland’s regulatory structure has intentionally fostered one of the strongest independent retail communities in the country.

Greater availability does not necessarily mean greater choice. In grocery settings, shelf space is determined by national purchasing contracts and supplier scale. Independent retailers are able to curate diverse selections and provide access for small importers, craft producers, and regional breweries. Expanding grocery store sales risks increasing uniformity rather than expanding meaningful consumer choice.

Alcohol in grocery stores functions as a traffic driver. National chains can absorb thin margins on beer and wine to increase total basket sales. Independent stores, on the other hand, rely on these categories as core operating revenue, “bread and butter” items if you will. SB 75 would create a structural imbalance in which billion-dollar corporations can treat alcohol as a promotional tool while small businesses depend on it to sustain payroll and benefits. Even when

legislation in other states includes license transfer provisions, they function primarily as exit mechanisms rather than long-term protections for small businesses.

We would also respectfully like to address the argument that expanding grocery alcohol sales could improve conditions in “food deserts.” Access to affordable and healthy food is a serious issue, particularly in communities like Baltimore, however, alcohol sales are not a solution to food insecurity. Public policy designed to address food access should focus directly on incentives for full-service grocery operations, fresh produce supply chains, and community-based food initiatives, not on expanding alcohol retail as a strategy.

This debate is not about resisting modernization or competition. As a small business, we support innovation and believe in vibrant, fair competition. The question before the Committee is whether Maryland wishes to move from a locally owned, community-centered alcohol marketplace to one increasingly governed by national chain retailers and multinational beverage corporations.

Maryland policymakers frequently express strong support for “buy local” values. We respectfully ask the Committee to consider whether SB 75 advances those values in practice. When policy decisions disproportionately benefit these national chains and corporations, it is appropriate to ask whether the outcome aligns with Maryland’s stated commitment to protecting small, locally owned businesses.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,



JoAnne S. Huey

Worker-Owner

On Behalf The Wine Source

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testimony SB 75 alcohol - food retailers MDDCSAM U

Uploaded by: Joseph Adams, MD

Position: UNF



A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

MDDCSAM is the Maryland state chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine whose members are physicians and other health providers who treat people with substance use disorders.

SB 75 UNFAVORABLE

Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License - Food Retailers

Senate Finance Committee February 20, 2026

The density of retail alcohol establishments is strongly associated with health disparities (1) and public health professionals have long worked to decrease it. If the goal is to increase health by encouraging food retailers to locate in food deserts, the result is likely to be the opposite.

It is not widely known that most alcohol sales are made to individuals with heavy use associated with harm (2) (because those with harmful use purchase the greatest quantities).

Grocery establishments will market and promote these products to increase consumption. **While food shopping, unavoidable exposure to products and promotions will trigger alcohol purchases**, including by some of those attempting to limit their consumption for health or to avoid harmful use.

Alcohol marketing and promotion tend to normalize alcohol consumption to people of all ages. **“De-normalization”** of substance use is an accepted public health approach for decreasing the use of tobacco and alcohol among youth.

Most individuals who drink do not experience overt harms, though **alcohol is a leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. (3)** that can lead to **hypertension, heart disease, stroke, cancer, liver disease, mental health disorders as well as social, occupational and educational problems. (4) (5)**

There is no threshold of alcohol consumption below which cancer risk does not increase, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Very respectfully,

Joseph Adams, MD, FASAM, addiction & internal medicine, MDDCSAM Public Policy Committee

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Public Health Law Clinic_SB75_OPP.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathleen Hoke

Position: UNF

Public Health Law Clinic

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Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 75

Alcoholic Beverages - Class A License – Food Retailers
Before the Finance Committee: February 20, 2026

The Public Health Law Clinic submits this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 75 because it increases access to alcohol by expanding sales to grocery stores, establishments where parents bring children, where teens often shop, and where people who have achieved sobriety or are working toward sobriety shop for essentials.

Senate Bill 75 creates an exception to Maryland’s prohibition on issuing Class A alcoholic beverages licenses to chain stores, supermarkets, and discount houses. The bill authorizes “food retailers,” defined as retail establishments of at least 3,200 square feet that sell food in multiple categories and accept SNAP benefits, to offer to purchase a Class A license from a license holder within 3,000 feet at fair market value. If the license holder declines the offer, the food retailer may apply to the local licensing board for a Class A beer or beer and wine license. Notably, the bill provides that an application by a food retailer is presumed to be in the best interest of the community. Maryland’s existing laws prohibiting alcohol sales at grocery stores actually serve the best interests of the community and should be maintained.

Public Health Harms of Increased Alcohol Access

When alcohol becomes easier to access in retail establishments, per capita alcohol consumption increases.¹ This correlation between access and consumption is not unique to any community or population, though many marginalized communities already suffer from oversaturation of retail alcohol outlets and the negative impact of the ready availability of alcohol. Given the negative public health consequences that can be caused by alcohol consumption, public health guidance recommends limiting where, when, and to whom alcohol may be sold.² Senate Bill 75 aims to accomplish the opposite by creating a pathway for food retailers to sell alcohol for off-premises consumption, with a presumption that such sales are best for a community.

Alcohol outlet density is not only associated with increased alcohol consumption, but is also related to increased harm, including violence, injuries, and other health issues. Alcohol outlet density is associated with an increase in violent crime exposure—with each 10% increase

¹ Norman Giesbrecht & Daniel T. Myran, *Harms and Costs of Proposed Changes in How Alcohol is Sold in Ontario*, 196 CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION JOURNAL 447, 448 (2024), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11001388/pdf/196e447.pdf>.

² *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health*, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (2018), <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/274603/9789241565639-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

in alcohol outlet access being correlated with a 4.2% increase in violent crime exposure.³ This correlation between increased exposure to violent crimes and alcohol outlet density is more pronounced when the alcohol outlets are for off-premises consumption. Access to alcohol outlets for off-premises consumption is associated with a 37% greater incidence of violent crime compared to access to on-premises outlets.⁴ The most frequently investigated alcohol-related incidents are assault, with alcohol outlet density being recognized as a community characteristic associated with high rates of firearm assault—so much so that reducing off-premises alcohol outlet density may reduce firearm violence.⁵ The increase in violence also reflects an increase in homicides, domestic violence incidents, and child abuse.⁶

In addition to an increase in violent crimes, increased access to alcohol is correlated with an increase in injuries not stemming from violence, such as accidents and suicides. Alcohol has numerous effects on the body, often impacting mental alertness, level of coordination, ability to respond to hazards, and willingness to engage in risky behaviors—all of which contribute to an increased risk of bodily injury. Cities and communities with a high density of off-premises alcohol outlets—such as convenience stores or grocery stores that sell alcohol—are more than twice as likely to have high alcohol-related hospitalization rates compared to cities and communities with low density off-premises alcohol outlets.⁷

Excessive alcohol use is a leading and preventable cause of death in the United States. Approximately 178,000 people die from excessive drinking each year.⁸ Among these deaths, about two thirds are attributed to chronic conditions, including several types of cancer, heart disease, liver disease, and alcohol use disorder, all of which develop from alcohol consumption over an extended period. However, even moderate drinking increases risks of cancer, heart disease, and early death—meaning that greater access increases harm, no matter the user.⁹ Also included in these preventable deaths are fatalities from alcohol-related car crashes. Communities, especially residential areas, with greater alcohol-outlet densities experience higher alcohol-

³ Pamela J. Trangenstein, *Outlet Type, Access to Alcohol, and Violent Crime*, ALCOHOL, CLINICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL RSCH. (2018), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6214776/pdf/nihms-986850.pdf>.

⁴ *Baltimore Liquor Stores Linked More to Violent Crime Than Bars and Restaurants*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Sep. 26, 2018), <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2018/baltimore-liquor-stores-linked-more-to-violent-crime-than-bars-and-restaurants>.

⁵ Veronica A. Pear et al., *Community-Level Risk Factors for Firearm Assault and Homicide: The Role of Local Firearm Dealers and Alcohol Outlets*, 34 EPIDEMIOLOGY 798, 801 (2023), https://journals.lww.com/epidem/fulltext/2023/11000/community_level_risk_factors_for_firearm_assault.6.aspx.

⁶ David Fone et al. *Change in alcohol outlet density and alcohol-related harm to population health (CHALICE): a comprehensive record-linked database study in Wales*, 4 Public Health Research 1, 2 (2016), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK350757/>.

⁷ L.A. COUNTY DEP'T OF PUB. HEALTH, ALCOHOL OUTLET DENSITY AND ALCOHOL-RELATED CONSEQUENCES 7 (2022). See *Baltimore Liquor Stores Linked More to Violent Crime Than Bars and Restaurants*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Sep. 26, 2018), <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2018/baltimore-liquor-stores-linked-more-to-violent-crime-than-bars-and-restaurants> (finding that off-premises alcohol outlets have a stronger association with incidents of violent crimes than on-premises alcohol outlets).

⁸ *Facts About U.S. Deaths from Excessive Alcohol Use*, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (Aug. 6, 2024), <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/facts-stats/index.html>.

⁹ Iona Y. Millwood et al., *Alcohol Intake and Cause-Specific Mortality: Conventional and Genetic Evidence in a Prospective Cohort Study of 512,000 Adults in China*, 9 THE LANCET PUB. HEALTH 956, 966 (2023), <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2468-2667%2823%2900217-7>.

related crash rates.¹⁰ Drunk driving crashes account for nearly 1/3 of all traffic fatalities in Maryland and within the past five years, nearly 800 Maryland residents have been killed in crashes involving an impaired driver.¹¹

Impact on People in Recovery from Alcohol Use Disorder

In addition to impacting the general population, greater availability of alcohol presents a uniquely harmful impact on those recovering from, or trying to recover from, alcohol use disorder. Environmental factors play a significant role in an individual's long-term recovery, and in order for there to be improvements in long-term recovery outcomes, there must be access to substance-free spaces.¹² However, increased alcohol availability—such as the sale of alcohol in grocery stores or convenience stores—negatively affects people in recovery, as it makes it harder for them to avoid triggers.

Today, someone recovering from alcohol use disorder has the freedom to walk into a grocery store and shop for necessities without confronting the very substance they are working to overcome. Senate Bill 75 alters this reality by creating additional opportunities for alcohol sales in food retail establishments, making it more difficult to access alcohol-free public spaces.

Because individuals in recovery face higher relapse rates when alcohol is widely available in their communities, recovery groups emphasize that safe, alcohol-free spaces are crucial for long-term sobriety. By allowing qualifying food retailers to obtain Class A licenses for beer or beer and wine sales, Senate Bill 75 reduces the number of public spaces that do not present a trigger—putting the recovery of those with alcohol use disorder at risk in exchange for convenience.

Conclusion

Increased availability of alcohol leads to higher consumption rates, creating several public health concerns including an increase in community and domestic violence and an increase in illness and deaths attributed to chronic conditions. Moreover, the greater availability of alcohol negatively impacts individuals recovering from alcohol use disorder by further limiting the number of public spaces that do not present a trigger. For these reasons, we request an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 75.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Public Health Law Clinic at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, directed by Professor Kathi Hoke, and not by the School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, or the University of Maryland System.

¹⁰ Paul J. Gruenewald & Fred W. Johnson, *Drinking, Driving, and Crashing: A Traffic-Flow Model of Alcohol-Related Motor Vehicle Accidents*, 71 J. OF STUD. ON ALCOHOL AND DRUGS 237, 237–38 (2010), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2841734/pdf/jsad237.pdf>.

¹¹ Impaired Driving, ZERO DEATHS MARYLAND, <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/road-safety/impaired-driving/>.

¹² Leonard A. Jason et al., *The Emergence, Role, and Impact of Recovery Support Services*, 41 ALCOHOL RSCH. CURRENT REV. 1, 7–8 (2021), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7996242/pdf/arcr-41-1-4.pdf>.

Srini Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Srinivas Pemmaraju

Position: UNF

Written Testimony in Opposition to Maryland SB0075

To: Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

From: Srinivas Pemmaraju, Magothy Wine & Spirits

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 75 — *Alcoholic Beverages* — *Class A License* — *Food Retailers*

Date: Feb 20th 2026

Introduction & Summary of Position

I respectfully submit this testimony **in opposition to Maryland Senate Bill 75** (“SB0075”), a bill that would significantly amend Maryland’s alcoholic beverage licensing framework by allowing certain “food retailers”, including large grocery stores and chain retailers meeting a defined set of criteria to *purchase or apply for Class A beer or beer-and-wine licenses* potentially at the expense of existing independent liquor stores and longstanding small businesses.

While framed as a modernization step for the regulation of alcohol sales, **SB0075 risks destabilizing Maryland’s unique retail ecosystem by tilting competitive advantage toward large corporate food retailers** that can leverage out-of-state supply networks, deep discounts, and one-stop shopping convenience. The potential for widespread displacement of small, locally owned liquor retailers — and the collateral economic harm this would cause — must be carefully weighed against any putative consumer benefit.

To illustrate the real-world effects of similar deregulation, this testimony draws on recent trends in **Colorado**, where expansion of grocery store beer and wine sales has been followed by significant closures and economic distress among small liquor retailers.

Overview of Maryland SB0075

SB0075 would amend Maryland’s Alcoholic Beverages Article to allow a qualifying food retailer — defined as a grocery or similar store meeting certain square footage, product mix, SNAP acceptance, and proximity requirements — to **offer to purchase an existing Class A alcoholic beverage license at fair market value** from a current holder or to apply directly to a local licensing board if the seller refuses the offer. If granted, the food retailer could sell **beer or beer-and-wine** under that Class A license.

Although proponents present this as a limited expansion of retail choice, the economic forces unleashed by such deregulation may mirror those seen in other states where grocery sales of alcohol have been rolled out.

Colorado Case Study: Market Shifts and Small Business Closures

Background: Regulatory Changes

In 2019, Colorado expanded the ability of grocery and convenience stores to sell **full-strength beer**. In 2023, voters approved Proposition 125, permitting grocery and convenience stores to sell **wine**. ([Colorado Springs Gazette](#))

These changes were touted by supporters as consumer-friendly and beneficial to competition. However, independent liquor store owners and economic observers quickly raised alarm about unintended consequences.

Observed Effects on Independent Stores

1. Store Closures and Revenue Loss

Since wine sales began in grocery stores in 2023, **dozens of independent liquor stores have already closed** — and analysts suggest *hundreds more could be forced out of business by 2026*. ([Colorado Springs Gazette](#))

Owners report dramatic drops in customer foot traffic — in some cases by 30 % to 50 % or more — directly tied to the ability of large grocery chains to sell the same products at competitive prices and with greater convenience. ([KOAA News 5](#))

This trend appears especially severe in areas where supermarkets and big-box retailers have been able to undercut small stores by combining alcohol with grocery purchases that consumers find more convenient. ([Colorado Springs Gazette](#))

2. Ripple Effects on the Local Alcohol Ecosystem

The closures of small liquor stores have broader implications beyond the individual owners and employees.

- Craft breweries and specialty wine producers in Colorado report lower visibility and reduced shelf space as grocery stores prioritize higher-velocity mainstream brands. ([KUNC](#))
- Reduced foot traffic in community retail districts affects adjacent small businesses and local economic vitality.
- Several independent store owners have pursued litigation against the state, alleging *uneven enforcement of licensing provisions* that advantaged larger retailers. ([Denver Gazette](#))

Together, these observations suggest that *allowing broad expansion of beer and wine sales into general food retail without robust safeguards can produce significant competitive imbalance*, often to the detriment of small business.

Academic Insight on Alcohol Liberalization

Independent research from the Colorado State University REDI Report found that the introduction of alcohol sales into grocery and convenience stores correlates with **material declines in liquor store visitation and revenues**, even if outright closures are not immediate. ([csuredi.org](#))

While the study did not conclude that closures are guaranteed, it underscored *substantial shifts in shopping patterns* and highlighted the **disproportionate impacts on rural and small-market liquor retailers** — the very businesses SB0075 could inadvertently expose to similar competitive pressures in Maryland. ([csuredi.org](#))

Key Concerns with SB0075

1. Competitive Imbalance Favoring Deep-Pocketed Retailers

SB0075 permits food retailers — which may include national chains — to enter Maryland’s alcohol retail market by acquiring existing licenses or applying directly to local boards. Large corporate retailers typically benefit from:

- Economies of scale in purchasing and distribution
- Larger marketing budgets and loyalty programs
- Integration with grocery shopping, reducing consumer transactions

This dynamic sharply disadvantages *small, local liquor stores* that lack similar scale and integration.

2. Risk of Liquor Store Closures and Economic Loss

Drawing from the Colorado experience, expansion of alcohol sales privileges into general food retail is associated with:

- Declining revenues for stand-alone liquor stores
- Increases in closures across independent operators
- Secondary economic impacts on local employment and small producer demand

Maryland’s rural and urban communities both stand to lose if similar dynamics take hold here.

3. Insufficient Safeguards for Local Businesses

SB0075 relies primarily on market-based license transfers and legal presumptions of benefit but does *not* include:

- Buffer protections for existing small retailers
- Economic impact assessments for local business communities
- Limits on chain participation beyond minimum store definitions

Without robust guardrails, the bill may unintentionally accelerate closures before community harms can be evaluated.

Conclusion & Recommendation

While increasing consumer convenience and modernizing laws can be laudable goals, **SB0075 errs by prioritizing market expansion without protecting Maryland's small business ecosystem**. The Colorado case — with documented store closures, revenue declines, and increased competitive pressure on independent retailers *following the expansion of grocery alcohol sales* — should give Maryland policymakers pause before pursuing a similar approach. ([Colorado Springs Gazette](#))

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee **to oppose SB0075** or, at minimum, seek amendments that:

- Protect existing small liquor store operators
- Provide economic impact analyses prior to expansion
- Establish licensing caps limiting chain retailer dominance

Maryland should strive for balanced policy that safeguards local businesses while addressing consumer needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Srinivas Pemmaraju