



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

**Bill:** HB 558 Prince George’s County – Alcoholic Beverages – Wine Festival Licenses (PG 316-26)

**Position:** SUPPORT

**Date:** February 23, 2026

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Dear Chair Melissa Wells,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“M-NCPPC” or the “Commission”) voted to support this HB 588 (PG 316-26). The Commission has voted to support this bill.

**What this Bill Does.** The bill as written repeals the restriction on the number of wine festival licenses that the Board of License Commissioners for Prince George’s County may issue annually.

**Increased Tourism and Revenue in the County.** The M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County has a wine festival every year. Under the current law, only organizers holding a Class C(3) or Class C(4) license, which are club licenses issued to non-profit, social, fraternal, or civic organizations, or a retailer license may apply for a wine festival permit. This structure limits who can organize festivals and often excludes government agencies and community-serving departments, including M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George’s County. The County currently limits the issuance of only one wine festival license per year, and the event cannot occur within (14) days of the Maryland Wine Festival in Carroll County or conflict with neighboring Counties’ events. The rules also require a hosting retailer or winery, with all other participating wineries paying a \$50 fee.

This structure restricts accessibility, favors established commercial hosts and hinders organizations like the Department of Parks and Recreation from independently offering this type of highly favored and in demand community event. Despite the “one festival per year” rule, multiple wine-focused events have occurred in Prince George’s County. Additionally, neighboring jurisdictions allow more than one wine festival a year. The District of Columbia had more than 5 last year. Charles County had three wine festivals with one being a two day event and Howard County had three wine festivals with the annual, Wine in the Woods being held over a two day period.

Across Maryland, Counties vary in their approaches. Some, like Montgomery County, permit greater flexibility by allowing wine festivals to occur on up to four weekends each year. Others such as Anne Arundel County maintain restrictions similar to Prince George’s County, often allowing only one official festival. Even in these counties, festival licenses are typically tied to existing retail or winery license holders, making it difficult for community organizations to participate. Therefore, if a for profit company comes and requests to have a wine festival in Prince George's County then the Department of Parks and Recreation would not be able to hold its annual wine festival, which is held in September (during the latter part of the wine festival season). Being limited to hosting one wine festival a year, may contribute to the reason why others now travel to the Charles County Fair Grounds to host.

While organizations can apply for a non-profit wine festival license through the State, this option underscores the need for alignment because State rules are more flexible and accessible than Prince George’s County rules. Revising Prince George’s County’s permitting structure and specifically removing the cap on the number of wine festival licenses will modernize our process, expand opportunities for residents, support Maryland wineries, and encourage broader community engagement while maintaining safety through continued County Board oversight.

**We encourage the delegation to give this bill a favorable report; it will increase tourism and revenue in the County, increase accessibility for community organizations, and strengthen the County as a competitive destination for cultural and recreational programming.**