

Written Testimony – HB456

HB456 – Howard County – Alcoholic Beverages – Gift Basket Permit (Ho. Co. 2–26)

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair and Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

My name is Christine Guenther, and I am the owner of WildFlower, a locally owned florist and gift retailer based in Anne Arundel County. I currently operate under Anne Arundel County's Gift Basket Permit, which allows my business to include limited quantities of beer, wine, or liquor in curated gift baskets.

I am writing in strong support of HB456.

The Gift Basket Permit in Anne Arundel County has provided a thoughtful, well-regulated pathway for small, independent businesses like mine to responsibly serve our customers. It has strengthened our ability to compete in today's marketplace while maintaining clear guardrails for safety and accountability.

In February 2025, I opened a WildFlower location in Maple Lawn in Howard County. I have already discussed working alongside Maple Lawn Wine and Spirits to bring this offering to Howard County in a way that supports existing licensed retailers and complies fully with Maryland law. As outlined in HB456, alcoholic beverages included in gift baskets must be purchased from a retail license holder, reinforcing local partnerships rather than replacing them.

The structure outlined in HB456 mirrors the Anne Arundel County model and includes important safeguards:

- Strict limits on alcohol quantities
- Mandatory ID verification at delivery
- Alcohol sales capped at 10% of gross annual sales
- Requirement that alcohol be purchased from licensed retailers
- Prohibition on use by chain stores or supermarkets

These provisions ensure the permit supports small, locally owned specialty retailers without expanding traditional alcohol retail operations.

From a business perspective, the ability to include a bottle of wine or champagne in a curated floral or gourmet gift basket enhances customer convenience and keeps purchasing dollars within the local economy. Without this option, consumers often turn

to national platforms or out-of-county providers who can offer a more complete gifting experience.

This permit does not transform florists into liquor stores. Rather, it allows small businesses to thoughtfully complement existing products while remaining primarily focused on flowers and gift retail.

Based on my experience operating under this permit in Anne Arundel County, I believe HB456 would provide meaningful economic support to Howard County small businesses while maintaining responsible alcohol control policies.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB456.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christine Guenther
Owner, WildFlower
Anne Arundel County and Howard County, Maryland

Thank you,



WildFlower | stem + sundry

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