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March 5, 2025

Senator Hickman, Chair
Representative Supica, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 631 – *An Act to Allow a Home Distiller to Distill and Share Homemade Spirituous Liquor*

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 631, *An Act to Allow a Home Distiller to Distill and Share Homemade Spirituous Liquor*.

LD 631 seeks to allow the owner of a home distillery to produce distilled spirits solely for *personal use*, which by definition, can include personal consumption as well as the owner sharing the product with the owner's family members and guests for on-premise consumption and shipping the product to the owner's family members and friends. The bill establishes certain limits for a home distillery including restricting stills or distilling apparatuses to the mash capacity of no more than 15.5 gallons; it restricts production to no more than 24 gallons of distilled spirits per person 21 years of age or older residing on the premises where the home distillery is located, in a calendar year, and no more than 48 gallons in a calendar year. It expressly prohibits selling or offering for sale any spirits produced in the home distillery and specifics that a violation is a Class E crime.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) has identified areas of concern both in terms of public health impact and the legality of distilling spirits at home, if LD 631 is enacted.

While distilling spirits at home is not legal by federal law, the allowances provided in LD 631 pose significant concerns for public health in Maine. There is correlation between increased access to alcohol and related health and safety risks even to those who are of age and consider themselves to be moderate drinkers, including but not limited to cancers, impaired driving, crime, violence, and injury, as reported by the National Cancer Institute and the World Health Organization. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's estimation of people in this country who die from an alcohol-related cause has increased from 140,000 to 178,000 each year. Where these concerns are currently present with beer crafted at home in Maine, expanding these risks with alcohol containing stronger alcohol by volume (ABV) exacerbate existing risks in our communities.

As written, provisions and restrictions provided in this bill appear difficult to enforce and will mean increased risk for additional harms such as overserving, furnishing of alcohol to youth, and

an increase in the dangers inherent in the distillation process when not done properly. A potential conflict is the provision within LD 631 that permits home distillers to ship their finished product to friends and family. UPS and FedEx allow alcohol shipments, though restrictions apply. When home shipping and delivery of alcoholic beverages are legal, there are concerns about a reliable mechanism for checking ID upon delivery of parcels. Evidence from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) also shows that when access to age-restricted products like alcohol increases, misuse and underage use increase, too. It is also known that the less effort an individual must make to obtain alcohol, the more likely they are to consume more of it than they normally would.

Maine's current three-tiered system in which spirits are regulated ensures that quality control of products and their safety are monitored. Factors such as ABV levels, flammability, and resident exposure to methane are less visible or able to be mitigated within the provisions of LD 631. To step outside of this three-tiered system increases the chance for accidental poisonings, fires, or injury.

When alcohol policy takes ownership of the harms that alcohol can present for individuals and for communities and takes full advantage of the existing systems for protection, it has a statistical impact that leads to a healthier state and future.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Puthiery Va".

Puthiery Va
Director
Maine Center for Disease Control
Maine Department of Health and Human Services