



April 9, 2025

Senator Craig Hickman – Chair Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

Representative Laura Supica – Chair Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

Members of the Joint Standing Committee of Veterans and Legal Affairs

My name is Carrie Rand-Anastasiades, and I am the Director of Northeast States for Wine Institute. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. Wine Institute is a public policy association of over 1,000 California wineries and affiliated suppliers dedicated to advocating for the responsible consumption and enjoyment of wine. California wineries produce 90% of the wine produced in the United States and provide a significant portion of the wine sold in licensed establishments in Maine. We respectfully oppose **LD 1376 An Act to Increase the Acceptable Level of Alcohol in a Low Alcohol Spirits Product and to Increase the Availability of Those Products**. This bill seeks to reclassify spirit-based cocktails with a 15% ABV as low alcohol, effectively removing them from the State Control System and making them available where beer and wine are sold.

Wineries, breweries and distilleries have introduced hundreds of creative new products that blur historical lines between wine, beer and spirits. In fact, in 2021 Maine altered the standard for low alcohol spirits content to accommodate new spirit-based products that came on the market. We feel further change would not be prudent as the cocktails are spirit based and contain higher percentages of alcohol per serving. Augmenting the ABV percentage to 15% would also take Maine out of line with neighboring states selling these same beverages. Currently New Hampshire defines low alcohol spirits as those at 8%, and Vermont at 12% . In addition, we feel lowering the standard for low alcohol spirits products will quickly transition to requests for reduction in taxes associated with these beverages. Beer- and wine-based products generally fit into existing alcohol tax categories, but states are now being asked to set new tax rates on spirit-based products driven solely by the ABV of new products that is lower than that of distilled spirits.

It is for these reasons we oppose the legislation as written and urge you to consider not only the revenue reduction from removing these products from BABLO's control, but also the tax implications that could further ensue.