

Thank you Senator Hickman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ian Dorsey, and I am the President of Mast Landing Brewing Company with locations in Westbrook and Freeport. I am submitting testimony today in opposition to LD 2155.

This year Mast Landing celebrates 10 years of operations here in the great State of Maine. Over that time we have had the good fortune to employ hundreds of incredible Mainers in all sorts of capacities. Many of whom are still with us to today building careers within Maine's world renowned brewing industry. Maine has consistently been recognized as a top destination for beer in the country. On the surface many attribute that to the high standards that Maine breweries adhere to. But I would argue that it is our authenticity as small business operators that keep the people coming. Each of Maine's brewers has a unique origin story. They have a purpose and a mission that is unique to their communities. It is these differences that appeal to people. We all provide vastly different experiences between our tap rooms and products and people support that. The expansion of retail locations as proposed in LD 2155 will only serve to erode that unique experience that consumers have come to love about Maine's brewing industry. Instead of more authentic experiences, this legislation will only incentivize large corporate hospitality groups to enter the scene and provide a cookie cutter experience that will quickly be abandoned by the people we depend upon to spend their dollars within our economy. If tourists can no longer find authenticity here, but instead find the same experience they can get from their local establishments, then it is Maine who loses. As a State that is a destination and not generally an area with pass through traffic, we depend on providing a value proposition to entice people to travel here. I am fearful that passing this legislation will rob Maine of one of its greatest current value propositions, a unique and fiercely independent brewing industry.

Maine's craft beverage industry did not grow by accident. It grew because of strong community support and thoughtful legislation that recognized the importance of protecting true manufacturers and maintaining a balance between production and retail interests. Access to market remains one of the most significant challenges for small producers, and policies that concentrate retail opportunities threaten that access and the diversity of locally made products available to consumers.

As you will recall, this Committee passed legislation last session to limit the number of on-premises retail liquor licenses that could be held by a manufacturer. Those limits were not arbitrary. They were the result of years of discussion among brewers and manufacturers who recognized that the absence of limits was threatening the integrity and sustainability of Maine's craft beverage industry. That legislation reflected a broad consensus among manufacturers and was carefully considered, thoughtful, and intentionally generous.

LD 2155 seeks to undo that work. By effectively doubling the number of retail licenses a manufacturer may hold and retroactively exempting certain licensees from the limits adopted in 2025, this bill would accelerate consolidation and further concentrate retail access under common ownership. The practical effect would be to make it harder for small, independent producers to compete for shelf space, tap lines, and consumer attention — while rewarding larger entities based not on production, job creation, or local investment, but simply on timing or scale of retail holdings.

I am also particularly concerned about the permanent exemption for licensees issued on or before May 23, 2025. Creating carve-outs based on license date introduces inequity into the system and disadvantages newer and smaller businesses trying to enter the market today.

Maine's craft beverage sector has thrived because state policies have supported local ownership, diversity, and competition. LD 2155 moves us in the opposite direction by encouraging consolidation and blurring the line between manufacturing and retail interests.

As a Maine brewer, I made significant investments in manufacturing capacity and local jobs based on the balance established in current law. Weakening those protections undermines the fair and competitive environment that has allowed Maine's craft beverage industry to succeed.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to strongly oppose LD 2155. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Ian Dorsey, President, Mast Landing Brewing Company

