

Good afternoon, Chair Hickman, Chair Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Sam Pierce, CEO and co-founder of Three of Strong Spirits, a craft distillery established in Portland in 2019. Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for HP 1449, *An Act to Modify Provisions of Law Affecting Small Distilleries*.

Since founding Three of Strong, I have experienced firsthand the challenges of operating a small distillery in Maine. My background as an entrepreneur in another highly regulated field—research and analytics for the investment industry—prepared me for the risks and responsibilities of starting and growing a business from scratch. We chose to build that business in Portland because we believed Maine aligned best with our mission and values.

I support this bill because Maine provides fewer supports for small distillers than many other states, and our industry is contracting as a result. In recent years, numerous distilleries have closed or relocated out of state. For a state recognized for its exceptional food and beverage culture, this trend is concerning.

While we endorse all components of the bill, we are particularly encouraged by Section 3, which would allow small distilleries to sell beer, wine, and spirits produced by other small Maine manufacturers without an additional on-premises license. This would enhance our tasting room experience and strengthen collaboration among Maine's craft producers, while removing a cost barrier to do so.

I would like to close with an example of the challenges Maine's small distillers face. Maine Spirits, the state's exclusive wholesaler, states that it aims to support Maine's economic growth. However, its website largely promotes national brands in its recipes, sales features, and new product announcements. This disconnect between mission and practice illustrates the broader difficulties Maine's small distillers encounter in many ways.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work on behalf of Maine's craft beverage industry.

Sam Pierce  
Three of Strong Spirits  
LD 2160

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