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Good afternoon Chair Hickman, Chair Supica and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Henry Sweets, Sales Director at Otter Point Spirits, a company formed in 2019 to create an Apple Brandy from Maine Apples. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter in support of HB 1449 "An Act to Modify Provisions of Law Affecting Small Distilleries."

In the five years I spent getting the business off the ground, I encountered layer upon layer of legal red tape and regulation. The staff at BABLO were helpful, but the Maine laws governing small-scale spirits production made it cumbersome and expensive for us to start our own distillery. So, we are working with a small distillery to release our product. Creating a more distiller-friendly set of rules will bring our venture closer to profitability.

This bill not only reduces onerous red tape, it also eliminates the prohibitively expensive fees that must be paid out to distributors who, in many cases, wouldn't have even touched our product. Also, the ability for other distilleries to sell our products directly to consumers will grow our customer base.

I am thankful that the legislature is looking into promoting small distilleries in our great state! The rules have been stacked against us, and anyone arguing that these fees need to stay in place is probably benefiting from collecting them. Let them collect their fees from global brands that benefit from vast economies of scale, and let hardworking Mainers sell their products for a fair price.