

April 10, 2023

Good Morning,

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

I am Tony Lyons, a resident of Auburn, President of the Maine Winery Guild and owner of WillowsAwake Winery in Leeds. Our 67 acre parcel of land is home to WillowsAwake Winery supported by 8 acres of vineyard, tasting room and the No. 10 Eatery @ WillowsAwake Winery, a Class A Restaurant. Our restaurant operates year-round.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer comments in support of **LD 1378; An Act Regarding Liquor Service by Catering Services for Special Events at Licensed Wineries, Small Wineries, Breweries, Small Breweries, Distilleries and Small Distilleries.**

The Maine Winery Guild is organized to advance the prosperity of the Maine wine industries, the farms that support them, and the community they serve. The Guild has a membership of about 40 wineries, cideries and meaderies spread across Maine that open their tasting rooms to visitors each year.

The Guild supports the Maine Wine Trail, with members opening the doors of 35 tasting rooms in 2022.

We are a very regulated industry at both the federal and state level and under current State law can offer for tasting only wine, cider and mead produced at our licensed facility. We can also sell bottles of product for off-premises consumption.

While our production processes occur year-round our tasting rooms operate seasonally, generally during the summer and generally closing early evening. For the remainder of the year the investments we have in our facility and tasting room lay idle, with little opportunity to generate income.

LD 1378 would allow us to offer our facility for rental for special events with liquor service provided by qualified catering services. Such services are already regulated under Section 1076, this proposed change simply allows these qualified catering services to serve liquor on our premises for special and private events when our facilities are not operating under the provisions of their winery licenses; such special events would be when we are closed to the general public.

State law already requires qualified catering services to be licensed, Section 1076 already requires prior notice to the Division of Liquor Licensing and Enforcement and requires prior approval from the municipality.

The Guild's members have invested heavily in their facilities, we just want the flexibility to more fully utilize those investments to drive additional income to our members.

The Guild also stands ready to work collaboratively with BABLO to implement the provisions of this proposal.

Thank you for your time and I welcome any questions you may have.