



Maine Grocers &
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NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST - LD 2088 An Act to Change the Number of Agency Liquor Stores Allowed in Certain Municipalities

Dear Senator Hickman - Chair, Representative Supica - Chair, and the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Christine Cummings and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association (MGFPA). The Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association is a business trade association representing Maine's food community; Main Street businesses, including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies.

In 2021, LD 591 *An Act Regarding Agency Liquor Store Licensing* was signed into law and adjusted the top 4 population tiers by adding one more permitted agency store license. Previously, in 2019, there were several bills that sought to make changes to the licensing framework and the tiers were ultimately updated via LD 1078. In 2019, a more comprehensive review based on census data supported the larger framework change. Interestingly, the topic seems to surface for discussion every three years or so as the business environment in our state evolves.

LD 2088 seeks to increase the size of a particular licensing tier. It is our understanding that this is likely to impact seven municipalities. In similar previous bills, the Bureau noted, "Generally, we are seeing a shifting of consumer living and purchasing trends in new and different growth centers in our state. Maine's mid-sized municipalities are seeing revitalizations." We support those who have made investments into their businesses, have a desire to expand their product assortment, and spur economic development within their communities.

LD 2088 also looks to adjust the population threshold for an additional license permitted by the Bureau based on seasonality and tourism. MGFPA is pleased to see the bill's language retains additional discretion for the Bureau as they analyze and review budding new municipalities that warrant additional store fronts specific to those areas with populations that fluctuate based on seasonality.

Agency stores operate with an exclusivity over other non-agency stores who cannot sell spirits. Our designated agency stores have competitively sought after and been awarded the right to sell spirits products. We want to be respectful of those who have garnered that right with the balance of those who are looking to do so. We support further review and consideration by the Legislature and the Bureau as to the proper balance based on Maine's changing population landscape and as it relates to the state's spirits business model and tourism strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Christine Cummings

Christine Cummings
Executive Director