



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 5, 2025

I offer my thanks for taking the time to allow me to introduce to the committee LD 636, An Act to Remove the Limit on Free Promotional Merchandise Bars and Restaurants May Accept from Vendors". The bill's concept is simple and should provide some financial relief to owners of bars, taverns, tap rooms, and restaurants. My name is Donny Ardell, and I represent House District 6.

Last summer at a Presque Isle eatery, whilst taking a well-earned break from campaigning on a hot day, I was enjoying a pairing of smoked beef brisket and a light refreshing draft lager. I found, however, the establishment was short on coasters, and I was forced to use a cocktail napkin. In a subsequent discussion with the proprietor, I learned their drink coasters had to be purchased and had been delayed in shipping. I asked why he had to buy coasters, and he told me Maine had a restriction on what retail licensees were able to legally accept as promotional items from distributors.

He complained that in a very cost-conscious business, items like coasters or glassware could be a significant business expense, and a changeover of the taps for seasonally-available draft beer could run a couple hundred dollars each, ten draft beer offerings represented \$2,000 just in tap handles, but those promotional items were otherwise offered free from the distributors, but for Maine's restriction.

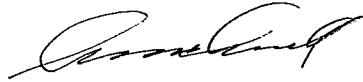
As a member of the board of the American employee association at a U.S. Consulate that trafficked in significant volume, I knew free branded promotional items from liquor distributors were commonplace, and included promotional signage, limited lifespan items such as pitchers, bar towels, glassware, t-shirts and aprons for servers, as well as disposable items such as napkins and coasters. That operation used quite a bit of the

glassware, and by keeping our overhead down, we were able to keep our prices down. I don't see any advantage to Maine's current restriction on receipt of promotional items, and see it acting as a price inflationary measure that could be 'the straw that broke the camel's back' in a tight and competitive business. This bill would remove that restriction.

I close saying with conviction that we have an opportunity to make a segment of Maine's business environment easier and more profitable. I appreciate your consideration of this bill to provide some relief to Maine's bars, taverns, tap rooms, and restaurants. And wouldn't you be proud to know, the next time you order a round and get a fresh coaster, that your vote made a difference?

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald J. Ardell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Donald J. Ardell
State Representative