

Good Morning,

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

My name is CHRISTY HEMENWAY, and I am a resident of WEST GARDINER. I am here today as President of the Maine Winery Guild as well as the owner of RUN AMOK MEAD.

The mission of the Maine Winery Guild is to advance the prosperity of the Maine wine industry. The Guild organizes the Maine Wine Trail and has a membership of roughly 30 wineries, cideries and meaderies.

Run Amok Mead is housed in what used to be the summer kitchen of an 1858 farmhouse, located on 8 acres in West Gardiner, complete with 1858 barn. We host visitors in our mead tasting room from May to October, and during the off-season, we turn to “Mead on Demand” – doing tastings by appointment.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer comments in support of LD 1033; “An Act to Regulate Alcoholic Beverage Competitions.”

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So... I began making mead in 2018. As a homebrewer, I experimented with lots of fun ingredients and interesting techniques. But soon, I wanted some sort of “yardstick” – to provide a comparison between what I had made and what others were making.

This is what drove me to participate in competitions, where I soon found that the best competitions were sanctioned by the Beer Judge Certification Program, Inc. aka the BJCP.

The structured evaluation, ranking, and written feedback from the judges of a BJCP competition are what we like to call “better than

bling!” Because while taking home medals is always great, isn’t it even better to get written feedback and a thoughtful evaluation of your product?

And... what better way to discover whether your home-made product is worthy of commercialization than by competing in a well-organized competition, with trained and experienced judges?

The success of my homebrew entries in mead competitions was encouraging, and I was hooked. I began the project of opening a licensed commercial meadery and Run Amok Mead was born.

Once I had my commercial license, I continued to compete, only now it was against other commercial mead producers. Sometimes that can be exhilarating, and sometimes it can be humbling – but it all adds up to educating the mead maker and that makes for better product for the consumer.

So Run Amok Mead continued to bring home medals, and next, I got interested in ORGANIZING a competition. Maybe we could establish “The Dirigo Mead Cup” here in Maine!

I reached out to facilities that could help manage the receiving and storage of competition entries and host the judging sessions. The first obstacle I encountered was that the locations I spoke with already held a liquor license, and that license would prevent them from hosting a competition in their venue.

I reached out to the organizers of competitions. When I asked Kevin Meintsma, the organizer of Minnesota’s Valkyries’ Horn competition how they did it, he said they wrote competitions into Minnesota State law. That sounded daunting, but it made sense to me.

I reached out to BABLO for suggestions and for the details about current law, and what would need to be addressed to make hosting a competition compliant with BABLO.

Then I reached out to Representative Shagoury about sponsoring this bill, and he was interested in helping bring this idea to life.

So to sum up - with this bill we hope to create a simple “permitted competition” where a competition – being a standardized evaluation of alcoholic beverages, can be organized and held here in Maine, and the related logistics (receiving and storing of entries, and the opening, tasting and judging of entries both commercial and homebrew) can be done in compliance with BABLO law.

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

Note:

Beer, Mead, & Cider: The BJCP was founded in 1985 and today they are a world-wide organization, with a presence in over 60 countries, and with over 7500 active judges. The BJCP develops standardized tools, methods, and processes for providing structured evaluation, ranking and feedback of beer, mead, and cider. (<https://www.bjcp.org/>)

Wine: <https://americanwinesociety.org/membership/>