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Testimony of Nate Cloutier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs  
April 23, 2025

**In Support of LD 1551, “*An Act to Support Maine Eating and Drinking Establishments by Allowing Vendors to Operate on the Premises of an Establishment with a Liquor License*”**

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, my name is Nate Cloutier, and I am here today on behalf of HospitalityMaine, representing Maine’s restaurant and lodging industries. I am also testifying on behalf of the Maine Tourism Association (MTA). MTA has been promoting Maine and supporting tourism-related businesses—from lodging and dining to camps, retail, guides, amusements, and historic attractions—for over 100 years. HM and MTA support LD 1551, “*An Act to Support Maine Eating and Drinking Establishments by Allowing Vendors to Operate on the Premises of an Establishment with a Liquor License.*”

We’d like to thank Senator Timberlake for introducing this legislation. LD 1551 offers a modest, practical change to state law that could give some food and beverage businesses an additional option. It won’t be a silver bullet, and it’s not meant to be, but it’s a tool that some businesses might choose to use in creative and collaborative ways.

Right now, the law prohibits a food vendor—someone already licensed to prepare and sell food—from operating within a business that holds a liquor license, even if both parties are fully licensed and following all food safety rules. This restriction limits opportunities for partnerships that could be mutually beneficial.

LD 1551 would allow a licensed food vendor to operate inside a licensed establishment—referred to in the bill as the “host”—so long as food and alcohol service stays within existing licensing frameworks. The alcohol would remain under the control of the host, and the vendor must be appropriately licensed to prepare and sell food. The proposal also includes safeguards to ensure proper supervision and alcohol liability remains clear.

This is about whether two licensed businesses can find a way to share a space—especially when one might only be open part-time or seasonally. And for some operators, particularly in rural communities or

high-tourism areas with limited commercial kitchen space, this could create opportunities to generate revenue, test out new ideas, or keep doors open during the off-season.

Let's say a small brewery in western Maine wants to partner with a licensed food vendor on slower nights. Or an inn on the coast wants to host a cheesemaker for a wine-and-cheese event. These kinds of arrangements already happen informally in some cases, but LD 1551 would create a clear and legal pathway for them to happen responsibly.

This won't work for every business, of course. Some will never use it. But for those who want to think outside the box and have the right licenses in place, this offers a straightforward option with economic development potential without requiring new regulations.

We appreciate the sponsor bringing this bill forward and the committee's thoughtful consideration of ways to support Maine's hospitality sector. LD 1551 respects existing safety standards while giving businesses a little more flexibility—and right now, that's something a lot of folks could use.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.