



Maine Beverage Distributors Association

April 23, 2025

LD 1712, An Act to Amend the Paid Family Leave Benefits Program to Balance Support of Businesses and Employees

Good afternoon, Sen. Tipping, Representative Reader and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, my name is Cheryl Timberlake. I am a resident of Mt. Vernon and serve as the Executive VP for the Maine Beverage Distributors Association, whose members are local family-owned independent distributors that provide beer, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages to retailers from every region of the state.

MBDA is testifying in support of LD 1712. We wish to thank Rep. Roberts for sponsoring this bipartisan bill.

Distributors work in Maine to efficiently move America's favorite alcoholic and non-alc products from producer to consumer, via local, licensed retailers. We service every account in Maine that sells alcohol and other beverages -that's more than 4400 retailers statewide.

MBDA role is to support consumer choice, provide brewery/winery access, and ensure responsible sales.

The third and fourth generation business owners have team members that have been with their companies for years/decades.

Maine's beverage distributor industry is an important component of the state's economy –providing over \$100 million in wages/salaries/benefits and contributing more than \$396 million to the state and local infrastructure.

Our members employ over 1250 jobs for hard working men and women throughout the state. These dedicated individuals live in the areas they distribute in.

From distributors and retailers to importers and manufacturers, the beer and wine industry supports a wide range of jobs- from truck drivers and warehouse workers to sales and logistics experts, and office workers and administrative personnel.

MBDA members are 100% employer self-funded. They provide complete benefit packages, FMLA for 90 days as well as short- and long-term disability plans to ensure our team members have job protection.

They already have mechanisms in place to allow employees to take time away from the positions and it is 100% paid for.

Currently, the distributors are paying into the system as prescribed by law but will never see the benefits as they hope to use a private plan to satisfy the provisions.

We support LD 1712 as it defines key features of the program and makes sure that it works for employers and workers.

We also support Rep. Poirier bill, LD 1333 and Rep. Soboleski bill LD 1169 with the provision that places limits on the fees charged for private plan substitutions and the refund of premiums paid if the employer has a substantially equivalent private plan.

Appreciate your consideration of our comments.