

Nicole Grohoski
Senator, District 7



P.O. Box 1732
Ellsworth, ME 04605

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

Testimony of Senator Nicole Grohoski in support of
LD 2155, An Act to Clarify Certain Laws Governing Licenses for the Sale of
Liquor by Manufacturers
Before the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
January 21, 2026

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Nicole Grohoski, and I am honored to represent the 22 communities of Senate District 7. Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 2155, "An Act to Clarify Certain Laws Governing Licenses for the Sale of Liquor by Manufacturers."

This bill amends Title 28-A, §1355-A, to further clarify the provisions of LD 1456, which was a Brewers' Guild initiative that passed last year. The bill would ensure that a local, small business owner who owns a brewery is not forced to sell other non-brewery businesses that are owned by the same business owner.

Previously, an owner of an on-premises retail liquor license held by a manufacturer (i.e., a brewpub) could have an unlimited number of such licenses, with no production volume requirements. LD 1456 curtailed this to just three licenses if liquor is being manufactured in one of the three locations, or six, if the liquor is manufactured in two of the six locations, at a volume of over 1,000 barrels per year. This well-intentioned law separates our Maine-based breweries from competitors that don't brew much beer but benefit from calling themselves brewpubs when really they are restaurants.

However, I represent a brewer and restaurateur who has more licenses than are allowed under the new law. One location brews beer, and the others are restaurants that are not advertised as brewpubs, where he sells the beer he brews, along with beer from other producers. My constituent is concerned that this law was not intended to force him to sell multiple locations, but that is the effect.

He has been working with BABLO to delay compliance actions while this bill is in the Legislature. The goal of this bill is to amend the new law so that brewpub licenses are still limited, but also so he can maintain his current business structure.

3 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333
State House (207) 287-1515 * Fax (207) 287-1585 * Toll Free 1-800-423-6900 * TTY 711
Nicole.Grohoski@legislature.maine.gov * legislature.maine.gov/senate

The bill does this in two ways:

- It increases the number of retail liquor licensees that a person with a majority ownership interest in a manufacturing licensee may hold from 6 to 12.
- It specifies that licenses issued on or before May 23, 2025 (the effective date of LD 1456) are exempt from the new restrictions on ownership interests, thus grandfathering existing businesses.

Finally, the bill has an emergency preamble because LD 1456 made a significant change to the license structure without any time built in to comply. My constituent (and I think some other business owners in the state) now need to quickly sell or close breweries and/or restaurants in order to come into compliance with the law. Selling is not a fast endeavor, and closing would have detrimental effects on all of the people employed at the establishment, with unfortunate downstream economic effects. Thus, it is my hope that your committee will support a solution in the near term.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill and my testimony. I'd be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.