

My name is Sarah Bryan, and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Brewers' Guild. We represent more than 150 independently owned breweries across the state—employing thousands of Mainers. I am here today in **opposition to LD 2155**.

Maine's craft brewing industry thrives upon the foundation that quality goods made by hardworking people in the small towns and cities of Maine, will always make a positive impact in local agriculture, the community and the Maine economy. Our members invest heavily in equipment, facilities, safety systems, and skilled workers. They do this in one of the highest-cost business environments in the country, facing higher energy, transportation, and labor costs here than in many other states. Yet Maine breweries continue to create jobs, anchor downtowns, and drive tourism, in no small part because state policy has historically supported small, locally owned manufacturers and fair access to market.

Last session, this Committee took an important and deliberate step by accepting LD 1456 and the brewing industry's self-selected parameters on the number of on-premises retail liquor licenses a manufacturer may hold. A decision resulting from years of discussion amongst brewers and reflective of a broad industry consensus, not about restricting growth—but about protecting the integrity of Maine's craft brewing sector and preventing operators from purchasing retail exclusivity.

The framework adopted last year was thoughtful, balanced, and inclusive. It preserved room for growth while addressing a real problem: imbalanced retail expansion by entities with minimal in-state production, and the consequences of marketplace distortion, consumer confusion about what a "brewery" is, and the crowding out of small producers who depend on retail and wholesale channels, that accompanied pre-existing loopholes in Title 28-A.

LD 2155 would undo that work.

By doubling the number of retail licenses a manufacturer can hold and retroactively exempting certain licensees from the limits adopted in 2025, this bill would blur the line between manufacturing and retail, accelerate consolidation, and concentrate retail access under common ownership, creating a positive bias for larger, well-capitalized operators while micro and independent Maine breweries—those that have invested in production, residents, and local supply chains—are pushed further to the margins.

This is precisely the kind of outcome the three-tier system is designed to prevent. When manufacturers are allowed to control more retail outlets, competition shifts away from product quality and innovation and toward ownership and capital. That dynamic disadvantages small producers and undermines the fairness of the marketplace.

The proposed retroactive exemption, and any other permanent carve-outs based solely on license date would also serve to create inequity, entrench incumbency, and make it harder for new and smaller manufacturers to compete and grow.

Maine's craft beverage industry has succeeded because policy has supported diversity, local ownership, and competition. An industry that contributes more than \$740 million annually to Maine's economy depends on maintaining that balance. LD 2155 moves us in the opposite direction by blurring the line between manufacturing, and retail and weakening the framework this Committee adopted just last year.

On behalf of the Maine Brewers' Guild and the independent breweries we represent, I respectfully ask that you stand by the considerate, consensus-driven decision you made last session and reject a bill that would reopen and destabilize that balance.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.