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Good morning Representative Caiazza and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am Louie Luchini, and I represent most of Hancock County in the Maine Senate. I'm here to present ***LD 378, An Act to Temporarily Waive Renewal Fees for On-Premises Retail Liquor Licenses.***

As we're all aware, the pandemic has caused chaos across the entire economy. Few industries have been hit as hard as restaurants. They've faced mandatory closures, reduced capacity limits, state-mandated curfews, decreased levels of tourism, and a general hesitance by many to dine indoors. Restaurants have struggled to stay afloat, and for most, sales have dropped massively.

This bill seeks to provide a small measure of financial relief to the restaurant industry by waiving fees when restaurants and bars apply for re-licensure this year.

Controlling the sale of spirits and collecting taxes from all types of liquor provides Maine's general fund with significant revenues. And restaurants are a key partner in establishing those profits. We should acknowledge the difficult environment they've faced and work to provide financial relief. This is a small step in that direction.

Obviously, this bill will come with a hefty price tag. In my view, utilizing the revenues from our over-performing liquor contract is a potential source of funding for this initiative.

Thank you for considering this legislation. I'm happy to answer any questions.