Sarah Bryan
Maine Brewers' Guild
LD 2155

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 and collectively generate over $740 million in economic impact each year. I am here today in strong opposition to LD 2155.

Maine's craft brewing industry is built on real manufacturing. 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 than many other states. Yet Maine breweries continue to create jobs, anchor downtowns, and drive tourism 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 limiting the number of on-premises retail liquor licenses a manufacturer may hold. That decision followed years of discussion among brewers and reflected broad industry consensus. Those limits were not about restricting growth—they were about protecting the integrity of Maine's craft brewing sector and preventing unchecked consolidation.

The framework adopted last year was thoughtful, balanced, and intentionally generous. It preserved room for growth while addressing a real problem: unlimited retail expansion—especially by entities with minimal production—was distorting the marketplace, confusing consumers about what a "brewery" is, and crowding out small producers who depend on fair access to retail and wholesale channels.
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 accelerate consolidation and concentrate retail access under common ownership. The result is clear: larger, well-capitalized operators gain an advantage, while small, independent Maine breweries that have invested in production, jobs, and local supply chains are pushed further to the margins.

The retroactive exemption is particularly troubling. Permanent carve-outs based solely on license date reward timing—not production, not job creation, and not economic contribution. That creates inequity and makes 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 thoughtful, 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.