To Senator Hickman, and Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee:

My name is Robert (Bob) Bryant, and I, with my son Zach, own Bryant's Brewing in Hartland. I am writing in opposition to LD 2155.

My son and I operate a very small brewery in our garage on Great Moose Lake in Hartland. We've used our location to enhance community gathering around the Lake, establish our brand, and create an incubator to build our business in Central Maine. Our small brewery is well received by the town and surrounding communities, as expected considering the amazing statewide community support and legislative policies implemented to grow the local craft beer industry in the State of Maine.

Even at our small size we've invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into our business and community. And we expect to expand that while using local resources and agricultural products for our business. However, that expansion is hampered in many ways in Central Maine. There are many challenges associated with growing our brewery including access to capital, and an aging demographic making it difficult to hire and retain workers. However, probably the most challenging is the ability to offer our beers to local establishments such as restaurants and bars. As self-distributors, it is necessary for us to get into retail locations, and travel to provide our products to these locations. Imagine, if you will, what would happen if retail locations within our market were owned by single manufacturers who were focused on selling their own products only.

That's why competing against those who would consolidate those locations to whom we would sell our beers while claiming to be a "brewery" without the capital outlay needed to brew beer at a sustainable level prevents us from achieving the growth necessary to make ourselves sustainable. Segregating manufacturing and retail sales appropriately provides both the opportunity for small brewers like us to grow both internally and externally. Removing limits on the number of retail establishments owned by any single brewery prevents the opportunity for large brewers to own and make decisions about what beers should be provided to the public. Removing that limit, creates a situation where large brewers could dominate the market. Consider, for example, if Inbev, the owners of Budweiser, owned all the bars and restaurants in Maine. By providing only their beers in those retail locations, they would destroy competition. The craft beer industry in Maine would no longer exist. For small breweries to grow into the market, they need access to as wide and varied a retail market as possible.

Maine's craft beverage industry did not grow by accident. It grew because of strong community support and thoughtful legislation that recognized the importance of protecting true manufacturers and maintaining a balance between production and retail interests. Access to market remains one of the most significant challenges for small producers, and policies that concentrate retail opportunities threaten that access and the diversity of locally made products available to consumers.

This Committee passed legislation last session to limit the number of on-premises retail liquor licenses that could be held by a manufacturer. And, in fact, it broadened the number of locations available to breweries. However, it did impose limits. Those limits were not arbitrary. They were the result of years of discussion among brewers and manufacturers who recognized that the absence of limits was threatening the integrity and sustainability of Maine's craft beverage industry. That legislation reflected a broad consensus among manufacturers and was carefully considered, thoughtful, and intentionally generous.

LD 2155 seeks to undo that work. By effectively doubling the number of retail licenses a manufacturer may hold and retroactively exempting certain licensees from the limits adopted in 2025, this bill would accelerate consolidation and further concentrate retail access under common ownership. The practical effect would be to make it harder for small, independent producers, like Bryant's Brewing, to compete for shelf space, tap lines, and consumer attention — while rewarding larger entities based not on production, job creation, or local investment, but simply on timing or scale of retail holdings.

I am also particularly concerned about the permanent exemption for licensees issued on or before May 23, 2025. Creating carve-outs based on license date introduces inequity into the system. It also creates a barrier to entry for new and smaller businesses to try to enter the market today. Stopping economic growth through legislation is not in the best interests of the State of Maine.

Maine's craft beverage sector has thrived because state policies have supported local ownership, diversity, and competition. LD 2155 moves us in the opposite direction by encouraging consolidation and blurring the line between manufacturing and retail interests.

As a Maine brewer, I made significant investments in manufacturing capacity and local jobs based on the balance established in current law. Weakening those protections undermines the fair and competitive environment that has allowed Maine's craft beverage industry to succeed.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to **strongly oppose LD 2155**. Thank you for your time and consideration.