

Will Fisher
Austin Street Brewery
115 Fox Street
Portland, ME 04101

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Thank you, Senator Hickman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Will Fisher and I am the founder and operator of Austin Street Brewery in Portland, and I am here to speak in opposition to LD 2155.

Austin Street was founded in 2014 and we're honored to be celebrating our 12th anniversary this year. We started the brewery with our own money and have grown the business organically over the last decade. In fact, along with my co-founder, we proudly own 100% of the company. With great pride and dedication to Maine craft beer, we have grown the brewery to support 20 employees and have produced over 700,000 gallons of Maine beer, which has been distributed all over New England along with millions of dollars into Maine's economy.

As you will recall, this Committee passed LD 1456 last session to limit the number of on-premises retail liquor licenses that could be held by a manufacturer. 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.

After LD 1456 was passed, Austin Street was able to decommission a portion of its brewing equipment that was being maintained only for the sake of satisfying the antiquated licensing requirements. This change and the subsequent benefits saved the company over \$50,000 just last year and allowed us to invest in new equipment for our main location, provide free health insurance coverage for employees, and add another employee to our team. LD 1456 has given the business a whole new outlook on its potential and ability to grow.

Unfortunately, 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 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've been a member of the Maine Brewers' Guild legislative committee for over a decade and have been involved in several significant legislative changes. With my firsthand experience, I can assure you Austin Street would not be making beer today if it wasn't for these changes. Last session's legislation has done a great job of defining and protecting what makes Maine beer so special while allowing ALL Maine-based beverage producers the ability to flourish. LD 2155 is set to turn back the clock on that progress.

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

Sincerely,

Will Fisher