

Andrew Geaghan  
Bangor  
LD 2155

Thank you Senator Hickman, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Geaghan and I am the owner of Timka Inc. DBA Geaghan's Pub and Craft Brewery and Geaghan Brothers Brewing Company in Bangor, and I am writing this testimony in opposition to LD 2155.

Geaghan's Pub began in 1975 and has grown to become a staple in the Bangor community. In 2012 we grew our business to include Geaghan Brothers Brewing Company and sell our craft beer throughout the state in collaboration with locally owned and operated distribution partners.

Over the years we have employed a large number of folks - both those who have made a career in the service industry and those working toward other life goals. At the moment we employ 75 people with an annual payroll just shy of \$2.5 million dollars. As true pillars of the community we pride ourselves in supporting our community as both a safe and inclusive gathering place and also very importantly as an active partner in many charitable causes. I believe that this is one of the major strengths of our overall brewing community. True and authentic local businesses engaging authentically with the community make up the fiber of this industry that I love. Breweries come in all shapes and sizes. Brewery owners and workers come with many different goals and motivations, but we thrive in authentic community connections, support, and continual local investment.

For us, the investment to become a true brewpub was well into the millions of dollars. We employed local contractors, purchased locally fabricated equipment, and kept all of the economic positives we possibly could in the State of Maine.

At this current time, it is true that the craft beer industry is in a transitional phase. With the drastic increase in numbers of breweries opening and paired with the waning consumption of beverage alcohol the craft brewing industry is moving into a more mature phase of development. Gone are the days when an individual can hang a sign and find immediate success. At this time it is critically important that we support true local craft breweries with sensible legislative action that supports those in the industry who are truly making a positive difference with investment and employment. It is critical that we support the homegrown and produced products that serve as a draw to outside dollars that flood into our state's tourism industry.

Maine does not need to open the door to individuals who mimic the true and authentic breweries that make our communities proud and replace them with deep pocketed imposters who strive to reap the benefits of what our industry has created for their own individual profit. Too many shadow "breweries" opening in this state which drive out potential sales and growth for the authentic breweries in all corners of this state could pose a devastating challenge. Most of our breweries are small. Most of our breweries are owner operated. Most of our breweries are built around a passion for the craft and desire to build positive community. These are the things that keep our Main Streets viable and interesting and are exactly the things that bring in excitement and authenticity to our great Vacationland.

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.

As you will recall, this Committee passed legislation 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.

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 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 and disadvantages newer and smaller businesses trying to enter the market today.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew J Geaghan