

Astrid Bowlby
Brooks
LD 2160

Dear Members of the Veteran and Legal Affairs Committee,

My name is Astrid Bowlby and I am writing in support of LD2160 - An Act to Modify Provisions of Law Affecting Small Distilleries. I own a seasonal nursery business, Honey Petal Plants. I am a vendor at both the Rockland Farmers Market and the Camden Farmers Market. At both of these markets I have had the opportunity to meet the owners of local distilleries who are also vendors. In particular, I have had the pleasure to get to know Nate Luce of Luce Spirits. We both began our businesses at roughly the same time and have been able to enjoy each other's hard work and hard won successes while starting ventures literally from the ground up. I have come to learn about some of the regulations involved in the liquor business, and it is tough to square some of them with the stated goals of the administration to support the growth of local entrepreneurs. I am not here to rage against all guidelines, rules, and regulations imposed by state governance. However, I know how tight the profit margin can be, especially in a start up venture. So, when I hear about the process Nate goes through and the associated costs, in order to vend his carefully crafted spirits, I am truly dumfounded. In order to encourage the incubation of local business I see the sense of reducing the fees that small distillers in Maine have to pay for the bottles that they sell from their own tasting rooms and allowing small, local distilleries to sell directly to their local restaurants, bars, and retailers. This would bring their distribution process more in line with our wonderful local producers of hard cider, beer, and wine. Just like these entrepreneurs, our small distilleries are hand-crafting products that are part of the agricultural and culinary scene. This is one of the reasons that farmers have collectively and wholeheartedly welcomed them as Farmers Market participants. We are a state known for its many food products and its restaurants and libations are a part of that. As we all know, a small business growing and investing back into its own neighborhood is a powerful economic tool. The example of Luce Spirits Distillery and Tasting Room is a classic example of a growing business that both supports the state economically by purchasing local ingredients and employing neighbors, while also supporting the social fabric (both in the busy tourist season and the off-season), offering programming and the space for artists, musicians, and poets to share their creativity in a convivial atmosphere. I would like us to help continue to make this possible in any way we can. One of those ways is to edit the economic and administrative requirements to reflect the nature of these small, Maine-based distilleries. Thank you for your attention and efforts to make this happen. Sincerely, Astrid Bowlby