

Testimony in Support of LD 2160

An Act to Modify Provisions of Law Affecting Small Distilleries

Chair, Senator, Representative, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Jay Lombard, and I am in the process of launching a small distillery in Oxford, Maine this spring. I am here today in support of LD 2160.

As we prepare to go to market, we are finding that the number and structure of fees, taxes, and administrative requirements placed on small distilleries make it difficult to plan a viable path to profitability in Maine. Many of these costs are fixed and apply before meaningful revenue is generated, regardless of scale.

For a new distillery, this means fewer resources available in the early years for hiring, purchasing equipment, or investing locally, even when demand exists. It also makes it harder to plan responsibly, because the true cost of operating is difficult to predict until very late in the process.

We want to sell and grow in Maine. Our goal is to build relationships with local restaurants and bars, establish our brand in our home state, and contribute to the local hospitality economy. Direct sales to on-premise accounts are the most practical and sustainable way for a small distillery to generate early revenue and stabilize its business.

Under current law, that path is unnecessarily difficult. Instead of encouraging small distilleries to grow locally, the system often leaves them with fewer viable in-state options during their most fragile early period. Our path to profitability should not depend on looking outside Maine to succeed.

LD 2160 addresses these challenges in a measured and responsible way. By reducing disproportionate fees, easing unnecessary administrative burdens, and allowing small distilleries to sell directly to licensed retailers, this bill helps align regulation with the realities of operating a small distillery.

Most importantly, this legislation gives small distilleries the opportunity to thrive, not just survive, in Maine.

I respectfully urge the committee to support LD 2160.

Thank you for your time and consideration.