

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Marvin Abney
RI House Finance Committee
82 Smith Street, Room 35
Providence, RI 02903

Re: 2020-H 8130 – Relating to Alcoholic Beverages – Retail Licenses

Dear Chairman Abney:

On behalf of the RI Hospitality Association, I write in support of H. 8130, which would allow restaurants to continue the practice of selling alcohol with takeout orders through the end of 2021. RIHA has been working closely with Speaker Mattiello on this legislation over the past several months and thank him for his leadership on this important issue.

As the industry begins to slowly recover, restaurants continue to remain dependent on takeout sales. Alcohol to go provides a much-needed revenue stream to an industry already struggling with reduced profit margins. Forward thinking, smart policy ideas such as this is exactly what the industry needs to keep our doors open.

The impact of COVID-19 on Rhode Island's restaurant industry cannot be understated. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Hospitality and Leisure Industry has lost as many jobs as construction, government, manufacturing, retail, education, and health services – **combined**. 93% of restaurant operators have been forced to lay off employees. Between March 1, 2020 and April 16, 2020, more than 36,000 restaurant employees lost their jobs as their employers were forced to either close their doors or significantly reduce their operations.

Restaurants have proven that alcohol-to-go makes sense for Rhode Island, with many restaurants coming up with fun, creative ways to create the “dinner out” experience for people dining in. There is wide-spread public support for this initiative. A recent survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association found that **81% of Rhode Islanders support making alcohol to go permanent**. The RI Hospitality Association has also taken steps to ensure that the sale of alcohol to go is done safely, adding the safe service of alcohol to go to their alcohol safety training.



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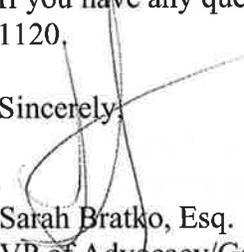
www.RIHospitality.org

Rhode Island's state budget will also benefit. When customers purchase a cocktail to go, they pay a 7% sales tax and a 1% local meals and beverage tax. At time when the state and municipalities are looking to balance their budgets, additional revenue streams that aren't a result of broad-base tax increases is an easy move.

Rhode Island's restaurant are facing unimaginable challenges. Extending alcohol to go will help ensure that the industry that employs over 87,000 Rhode Islanders continues to be an economic driver for the state.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah@rihospitality.org or 401-223-1120.

Sincerely,



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