

Rhode Island Brewers Guild

50 Hopkins Ln, # E-2 Wakefield, RI 02879

February 22, 2021

Dear House Committee on Small Business,

The Rhode Island Brewers Guild is writing in support of House Bill 5255. The sole purpose of this bill is to increase the amount of beer that small breweries can sell to their customers. As you may be aware, RI currently only allows breweries to sell one case per person per day. This is by far the fewest for any state in New England; Massachusetts is unlimited, Connecticut is 3 cases, New Hampshire is unlimited, Vermont is unlimited, and Maine is over 5 cases.

Restrictions such as this not only make it very difficult for small businesses to grow and create more jobs, but also present unnecessary obstacles to simply keeping our business open during this difficult time. Legislation such as this is critical now more than ever, not only for us but for all of the small businesses we support from the local printer we use for labels, to the local cardboard manufacturer, local farms we buy ingredients from and provide feed for their livestock, and even the food trucks struggling to survive who set up at our taprooms every weekend.

As you know this pandemic has been challenging for small businesses. Especially taproom breweries who rely completely on on-premise sales. With the 50% capacity restrictions on indoor drinking most breweries are struggling to just get by.

Throughout the pandemic, Rhode Island Breweries have come together to help our communities and support restaurants and bars. Breweries have taken back kegs from bars, restaurants, and distributors during the initial shutdown to prevent spoilage. Several breweries/distilleries switched from making beer and spirits to making hand sanitizer, and many of us continued donating to our local communities to help all the things we love survive. Breweries banded together to produce a collaboration beer, "All Together," to support the hospitality industry. The RIBG provided support for restaurants and bars looking to package alcohol for take-out. Even while struggling and limited to takeout, breweries did not ask for executive orders to increase limits.

The proposed tiered system is the result of discussions with distributors, retailers, and hospitality. The result is a 2 tiers system for breweries, one tier for small breweries producing less than 7,500 bbls/year which would be allowed to sell more beer, up to 10 cases, and another tier for large breweries producing 7,500 bbls/year which would be held to the existing 1 case limit. Small breweries would benefit from additional off premise sales allowing them the opportunity to grow and reinvest in their business with the possibility of expanding into a large-

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scale packaging brewery. The bill also includes language requested by hospitality for alcohol server training and liquor liability which all breweries currently meet and feel is necessary.

The Rhode Island brewing community has been a success story. In just a matter of a few years since the passage of on-premise consumption the number of breweries has grown from 5 to 33 breweries. This has brought tourism to the state and created numerous jobs. We believe that House Bill 5255 will help struggling breweries and foster growth in the industry. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Ruff

President

Rhode Island Brewers Guild

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