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Chairman Solomon and members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Gorman and I and operate Sea Witch Medicinals, a Rhode Island company that produces THC-infused beverages in both the regulated cannabis market and the hemp market. I respectfully submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 8414. I want to offer the Committee a vantage point you may not hear from many other witnesses: that of a small Rhode Island producer who operates on both sides of this line and sells a similar product through two very different channels.

Because we make THC beverages from both Marijuana and hemp biomass, I can tell the Committee from direct experience that low-dose hemp beverages are well suited to sale through licensed adult-beverage retailers. These are adult products, purchased by adults, and the liquor-store channel is built to handle exactly that — age verification, trained staff, and established compliance routines. House Bill 8414's decision to route these products through licensed retailers and the existing three-tier system matches how the product actually behaves in the marketplace. In the dispensaries channel, beverage consumers are not looking for low-dose products. My higher dose beverages sell great at dispensaries, but the low-dose products do not.

I want to be candid about why that channel matters so much to a company our size. We genuinely appreciate being able to sell our low-dose beverages into liquor stores. For a small producer, that is not a convenience — it is access to consumers. The cannabis retail market, by contrast, is difficult terrain for a small cultivator. Speaking generally, marijuana retailers and dispensary do not tend to favor small producers, and shelf space there is hard for a company like ours to win and to keep. The adult-beverage retail channel gives small Rhode Island producers a real and separate set of customers for low-dose beverages — customers we can actually reach. Preserving and stabilizing that channel in statute is, for small businesses like mine, one of the most valuable things this bill does.

Operating in both markets, I also see something I would respectfully ask the Committee to weigh as it refines the bill. A producer like us currently navigates two different sets of testing and labeling requirements for what is, to the consumer, a very similar product. To the extent the hemp beverage testing and labeling rules can be aligned more closely with the standards we already meet on the regulated cannabis side, it would reduce duplicative cost and complexity for dual operators and give consumers more consistent information. I support House Bill 8414; I would simply encourage the Committee, and the Cannabis Control Commission as it implements the bill, to keep these two regimes as closely aligned as the products' similarities allow.

Finally, I want the Committee to understand what regulatory stability would unlock for a company like ours. Today, two things limit how far we can grow our hemp beverage line: the shortage of in-state contract production capacity, and the uncertainty in hemp regulation. If House Bill 8414 provides a stable statutory framework, and as more in-state contract production capacity comes online, we would seriously consider scaling up production of our hemp products here in Rhode Island, and we would welcome partnering for broader in-state distribution. That is growth, employment, and tax revenue that can happen in this state — but only on a foundation of regulatory certainty. Without it, that investment does not get made, here or anywhere.

For these reasons, Sea Witch Medicinals respectfully urges the Committee to advance House Bill 8414. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Gorman
Owner, Sea Witch Medicinals

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