

To: Representative Carol Hagan McEntee  
Chair, House Small Business Committee  
Members, House Small Business Committee

From: Elyse Paré  
Owner, Graze on Main  
58 Main Street, East Greenwich, RI 02818

2/3/2022

My name is Elyse Paré and I am one of the owners of Graze on Main, a small restaurant in East Greenwich, RI. First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for the time you have dedicated in support of small businesses like mine. We rely on strong voices like yours to be the foundation for our success.

As Chair of the Small Business Committee, you have seen first hand the struggles our small businesses face each and every day and how the COVID-19 pandemic has added significant difficulties in our operation. I think most would agree our restaurant industry was hit the hardest and continues to struggle. Limited capacity, reduced staffing, increased costs, and transforming outdoor spaces are amongst the few of the challenges we are still facing today.

While Graze on Main was fortunate to be able to create an outdoor space for our restaurant (20+ seats), the majority of our orders (95%), are still for take-out. Many people support dining "outside," but I think people feel safer in their own homes during the pandemic and its clearly reflected in our orders. Our most popular menu item is our "Grazer" charcuterie board which includes an assortment of cheeses, cured meats, fresh fruit, olives, jams, nuts, etc. This board serves 6-8 people. In addition to sourcing products locally and from Europe, we pride ourselves on the small selection of wines we carry. My partner, who immigrated to the United States, studied wine and has worked in the restaurant/wine industry for 20+ years. He very much enjoys making wine recommendations for the ultimate cheese and wine pairing. When a couple is picking up a board, which serves 6 people, its not uncommon, for example, for some to enjoy red, and others to enjoy white. The existing law allows us to sell two bottles, which is ideal when providing a meal that serves 6-8 people. This provides ONE glass of wine to each person "grazing" and they can all experience the ideal pairing as intended. While I understand the experience/product we provide at Graze is unique, in no way do I see reducing the amount of wine/beverages to-go as a positive for any restaurant, especially ours.

The existing law certainly doesn't make our restaurants whole, (or even close to being whole!), but it does help us provide an experience similar to the dining experience our customers would have had in person. In no way do I see how a restaurant (Class B license holders) possibly competes with a Class A license holder by having the ability to sell two bottles of wine.

Can Class A license holders demonstrate a negative impact on their business similar to what us restaurants are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic? For two years now they have seen growth, something us restaurants only dream of experiencing again. Taking something (anything!) away from the restaurants should not be up for debate in these unprecedented times. I respectfully ask that Bill 2022 -- H 7209 is supported and passed as presented.

I apologize for the late change in my schedule and inability to attend tonight's meeting, but should matter be continued, I would be grateful for the opportunity to continue the conversation on behalf of restaurants in our State.

Respectfully,  
Elyse Paré  
Graze on Main