

Testimony of John F. Droney
on behalf of
Brescome Barton, Inc. on
House Bill 5021
“An Act Concerning Alcohol Liquor Pricing and
Hours of Operation for Permittees”

February 28, 2012

Mr. Chairmen. Members of the Committee. My name is John F. Droney. I am attorney from West Hartford, CT and legal counsel to Brescome Barton Inc. Brescome Barton is located in North Haven, CT and is the largest wholesaler of spirits, wine and beer in the state with over 400 employees.

I am submitting as counsel to Brescome Barton Inc. testimony on House Bill 5021, “An Act Concerning Alcohol Liquor Pricing and Hours of Operation for Permittees” as proposed to this committee by Governor Malloy.

We have reviewed this comprehensive bill and have found many changes that will remove or modify regulatory barriers to create a freer marketplace for the sale of alcoholic beverages in this state. A number of these changes will benefit consumers. These include Sunday sales which are now allowed in 48 states, extending hours for package stores, bars and restaurants and quantity discounts which will support moderation in pricing.

However, we also have found a number of provisions which, in our experience and judgment, would dramatically change Connecticut’s regulatory control over the sale of alcohol and impact public health, safety and welfare. Of paramount concern is the elimination of published pricing. Today’s system of published pricing plays a necessary role in maintaining the delicate balance between an open marketplace and the need for government regulation over the sale of alcohol. Where published pricing has been eliminated, it has led to a disorderly and discriminatory marketplace, as well as loss of jobs, revenue, and taxes through anti-competitive practices. The United Kingdom, is a prime example of a market which is currently overwhelmed with public health and safety concerns, all directly related to deregulation and the uncontrolled pricing of alcohol being promoted by essentially large box store food companies in price wars. Attempts by government officials are currently being made to re-establish pricing controls in the UK, however, the reality is, once the genie is out of the bottle it is almost impossible to get it back in.

In summary, while we applaud the Governor’s efforts to modernize the state’s alcoholic beverage laws, we strongly caution you to avoid any changes to the system that have been proven effective and necessary, such as published pricing. A move in that direction will have negative economic consequences and only lead to unnecessary health, safety and social problems in this state.