

Dear Representative D'Agostino, Senator Witkos, Senator Leone, Representative Smith, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. I am writing to in support of H.B No. 5036. My name is Dana Bourque. I am the President of the Firefly Hollow Brewing Company in Bristol, and I represent the Connecticut Brewers Guild as President of the organization.

Connecticut is now home to more than 60 breweries. That number is up from only about a dozen six years ago. The lifeblood of this burgeoning industry is the taproom, a place where breweries are able to host customers in their own establishments. It's a place where patrons are able to intimately interact with both the beer and the people behind the brewery. What makes the taproom such an essential part of the small brewing business is the benefit of direct to consumer sales. Brewing is a costly industry requiring lots of specialized equipment, skilled labor, repairs, and materials just to name a few. To support that high cost and support growth, small breweries rely on the higher margins they capture in their taprooms.

What makes HB 5036 important to CT breweries is removal of the 9L direct to consumer sales cap. This cap forces Connecticut breweries to turn down customers. I speak from experience when I say it's routine for the Firefly Hollow Brewery to turn down sales from folks who wish to purchase more than than the current 9L limit. This is detrimental to our businesses, but it also hurts the state by preventing us from effectively capturing out of state tourism dollars. Everyday my brewery turns down sales while CT residents pour over the border to purchase case over case of Tree House Beer.

In terms of regional competitiveness, Connecticut Breweries are also at a disadvantage. New York and Massachusetts both have no limits on direct to consumer sales while also enjoying excise taxes that are half of what we see in CT. This allows breweries in those states to reinvest and grow more effectively, as well as price their products more competitively when compared to Connecticut. Lifting the 9L sales cap will help Connecticut breweries be more competitive with their neighbors, and help these small breweries grow into stable, profitable businesses.

I'd like to leave you with a single thought. In Connecticut, I can purchase more wine direct from a winery in California across state lines in a single purchase than I can in person from a Connecticut Brewery that supports it's community, pays taxes here, supports local agriculture, manufacturing, and the trades. In this matter, our state is better to Sonoma County than to Hartford County, and that needs to change.

Thank you