

Dear Madam Chairperson:

I am writing today in support of H.B. 5036 – An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness. As the President of the Connecticut Hop Growers Association I want to thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of House Bill 5036.

I'm writing today as I've personally watched the craft beer industry in CT grow by leaps and bounds. The pioneers of CT breweries were the ones that asked the Connecticut Agriculture Experimental Station and the farmers on why hops were not grown in CT. The movement of the craft beer industry brought back hops as a commercial cash crop that was not grown in the state for more than a century prior. In only the last few years CT has gone from about ten licensed breweries to over sixty! Each one of those breweries has been itching to use farm fresh CT ingredients. One of my roles as President of the CHGA is to ask small CT based brewers how it is to work with the state. While they are often proud to be contributing members of the CT economy, the one thing that I commonly hear back is that they are restricted in ways that surrounding state breweries are not, nor the CT vineyards.

HB 5036 seeks to allow package stores the authorization to the sale at retail from the premises of sealed containers supplied or filled by the permittee of draught beer for consumption off the premises. This will put our breweries and package stores in line with NY legislation in permitting draught beer sales in package stores. An excellent way to boost business for breweries, package stores, and the liquor distributors that bring the product from the site of manufacturing to the site of sale. This opportunity will increase the demand for jobs in each of the mentioned work sectors, as well as, open the door for the small breweries who do not have the ability to bottle/can their product, but will then be able to sell more beer to the craft beer community.

HB 5036 seeks to eliminate the nine-liter retail volume limit imposed on these small manufacturers. As with many manufacturers, retail sales carry the highest margin and as such allow them to grow their sales and manufacturing staff to support these increased sales. This will put CT breweries in line with Massachusetts breweries with a no retail volume limit. In an age where craft beer enthusiasts travel hours from nearby sites to chase the new trending beer, or the one that has been talked about on social media, or to obtain something that no one back home has; we should allow our hard working breweries to be able to open the limit on sales in order for the craft beer enthusiast to stop in CT and not keeping traveling up to MA so they can buy the amount of beer they wish. Eliminating this arbitrary limit on retail sales for breweries should result in increased job creation, increased sales tax revenue, increased excise tax and increased income taxes, by all accounts a win for the state of CT. I urge you to support HB 5036 today and be a part of creating a flourishing manufacturing industry in the state!

Thank you for your time.

Alexander DeFrancesco

President of the Connecticut Hop Growers Association