

Dear Representative D'Agostino, Senator Leone, Senator Witkos, Representative Smith, and distinguished members of the General Law Committee,

My name is Ben Friert. I am submitting written testimony in support of H.B. 5036 – An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness. As a resident of the State of Connecticut I want to thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of House Bill 5036.

The proposed changes affect not only myself, but also my family members and guests that visit from out of state. The component of the bill that is most important to me is the removal of the nine-liter retail limit imposed upon state manufacturers of beer. Although my parents may never have enjoyed the ability to visit a local brewery, the craft beer industry is currently expanding at a break-neck pace. The availability of very fresh craft beer is a luxury that should be enjoyed by all who wish to partake. As the law currently reads, if I visit my local CT-based brewery, I am only able to purchase nine liters of beer, requiring me to bring a friend in order to purchase a single case of pint-sized cans for my party or gathering! As always, I still have the opportunity to visit my local retailer to purchase as much beer as I want, however I'm often presented with a lack of variety, higher prices and beer that may be months old. I also often encounter retailers hiding, limiting, re-packaging or price-gouging more difficult to find beers that may see limited distribution in the state. When I visit my local brewery, it is often an educational experience. I learn about everything from the new varietals of hops utilized, which farm the adjunct ingredients were harvested from and the fact that it is a State of CT law that prevents me from buying more than 19 pint-sized cans at a time. I find it incredible that the State of CT has maintained such a protectionist law while CT based vineyards are able to retail an unlimited volume of wine to tasting room visitors. Taking this one step further, I often find myself in New York or Massachusetts visiting breweries. Those states do not impose any type of volume limits and I regularly see patrons utilizing hand trucks to maneuver their daily purchases to their vehicles. It's honestly shocking to see Connecticut, a state that seems to be financially strapped and losing residents left and right hold off on changing this regulation for so long based on the perceived "threat" to the retailer and wholesaler association. At the end of the day, I asked myself, who are we protecting by keeping this statute in place, and the answer was clear, it's not myself or my fellow consumers. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ben Friert