

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

My name is Aaren Simoncini. I am here today in support of H.B. 5036 – An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness. As both a resident of the State of Connecticut and Co-Owner of The Beer'd Brewing Company in Stonington, I want to thank you for the opportunity to voice my support for this bill today.

As you may be aware the craft beer industry is flourishing not only within Connecticut, but also throughout the United States. My wife and myself joined this movement about six years ago, when our great state played host to only a handful of small batch beer manufacturers. With our own savings and a crafty food budget we were able to open our doors to the public in November of 2012. At the time, our state only offered two permits allowing the manufacture of beer. We selected the "Manufacturer for Beer" permit as we thought it best to leave the restaurant business to those who already excel at it in our area. This permit allowed for the complimentary sampling, 2 oz at a time, of the beer we made and the takeaway sales not to exceed 8 liters at a time. Our extremely small brewery made about 100 barrels of beer in our first year, enough to service about 100 customers a month. We sold almost every drop of beer we could make via our taproom in growler format, the highest margin revenue stream we could attain.

As a tiny company, we were slowly able to grow our production size as time went on, purposely avoiding bank loans as we sought a stable financial future. Working nights and weekends was the reality for myself and my family, as we maintained full time jobs elsewhere in order to both finance and pursue our entrepreneurship dreams. When the State of Connecticut rolled out the new Manufacturer for Beer and Brewpub permit we were quick to change our permit status. The new-found ability to retail for on premise consumption and sell an additional liter of beer truly served to throttle up our ability to earn and grow our business. At this point we were able to hire our first two employees and I was personally comfortable enough to leave my day job. While nights and weekends were still our reality, at least we were able to pay ourselves a modest income.

Today, only five years after opening our doors, we produce just over 2,000 barrels of beer a year. I am happy to say that our payroll includes seven full time employees and eight, part time positions with plans to double these numbers this summer when our second production facility opens in Groton, CT. The careers that we've created in Connecticut based manufacturing require skilled labor that is not necessarily acquired via a college degree, offering a career path that seems to be both in short supply and desperate need. As a very small company, our retail margins help us to offer benefits that are disappearing from the corporate world at an alarming rate. Our team enjoys company sponsored health insurance, an IRA plan with a matching component, a generous paid time off structure and continuing education opportunities.

In conclusion, there are many reasons that this bill would highly benefit the consumers, the craft brewing industry, ancillary industries and the State of Connecticut. Not only increased revenue for the state when it comes to income tax but also increased and accelerated collection of excise, and sales and use taxes. More manufacturing jobs that require skilled labor not necessarily requiring a college degree. Increased tourism and the associated spending. Growth of ancillary industries not only like malt and hop growers, but also, wholesaler and retailer operations. Finally, lower consumer prices, better access to consumer goods, and fresher product direct from the operations that make them.

Once again, I urge the committee to support HB 5036 in turn showing their support for the flourishing craft brewing industry Connecticut and all those that it both now and in the future will employ.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Aaren M. Simoncini
The Beer'd Brewing Co.
Stonington, CT