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State of Connecticut
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Testimony

In Support of House Bill 5036

An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness

General Law Committee

March 6, 2018

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5036, An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness. I would specifically like to address the 9 Liter limit that is imposed on the sale of off-premise craft and microbreweries within our state. This is an unnecessary arbitrary restriction that is inhibiting our small businesses from expanding and creating jobs. Another way to describe this is we are living with our grandfather's laws even though we are the grandsons and daughters trying to be entrepreneurial and survive in CT.

Craft breweries and distilleries have an opportunity to become booming businesses here in Connecticut, especially in Southeastern Connecticut. These are vibrant businesses that cater to all different age groups and attract tourists from other areas and other neighboring states – businesses that as a legislature should be creating policies to allow them to grow.

In fact in recent years the popularity of breweries has skyrocketed, with roughly 60 locations around the state, providing Connecticut an opportunity to be a destination for craft brewery enthusiasts and tourists alike. The problem is our neighboring states allow their breweries to sell directly without limitation therefore CT cannot compete and we continue to lose tourists who have now focused on Mass north where they are able to purchase the quantities they desire. The CT limited sales of 9 liters is costing the state in jobs, tourism, and preventing new breweries from setting down roots in our state.

Currently in Connecticut craft breweries and microbreweries can sell 9 Liters per day per person. This amounts to approximately 19 cans per consumer. Most craft beer packaging is configured in 6, four-packs in a 24 can case flat. The arbitrary law amounts to clumsy packaging and a waste of both material and money. These craft breweries are also unable to sell kegs directly to consumers which present a major limitation. All of these inconveniences are then translated into the end price – which consumers ultimately pick up.

Allowing micro-breweries to sell a larger volume directly will help increase the demand of the goods at the package store. If you are from Hartford and visit a Brewery in Stonington, you purchase your case and when you want this micro-brewery beer that you have been able to really develop a taste for – you ask your local package store to stock it.

The current limitation puts our craft breweries at a disadvantage when compared to the remainder of states in New England. This legislation is about increasing our economic vitality of our state and about helping local, small businesses thrive and grow by helping to increase tourism and generating many job opportunities for local residents.

Please raise separate and unique bill focused solely on increasing the amount of beer that a craft or microbrewery may sell directly to their customers. – By doing so the committee would be enacting a positive policy for small business and promoting a common-sense approach when looking for ways in which to make our state more economically competitive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and submit testimony in support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

**State Senator Heather Somers
18th District**