

FIRE & RICE

4801 Harford Rd. Ste. S2 * Baltimore, MD 21214 * 443.759.4387

February 19, 2021

Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair
Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 868 - 45TH DISTRICT CLASS B-D-7 LICENSE

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Alex Champagne, I am one of the two co-owners of Fire & Rice located at 4801 Harford Rd in Baltimore City. We write in support of House Bill 868 creating a new B-D-7 liquor license for 4801 Harford Road that will ultimately reside at the Fire & Rice sushi restaurant. I want to share some information about my background, Fire & Rice's mission and our intentions with using the proposed license for our business.

For more than 10 years, the neighborhoods of Waltherson, Hamilton & Lauraville have been my wife, mine and now our 3-year old son's home. Our relationship with our neighbors, local businesses and community associations has only grown stronger and more important to us over the years. For even longer than that, I have worked in the restaurant & hospitality industry in Baltimore. I have been fortunate enough to work at and manage some of Baltimore's most beloved spots; Golden West Cafe, True Chesapeake, Fadensonnen & Hamilton Tavern to name a few. Learning from a diverse group of incredibly talented, passionate & caring owners & managers, I have always wanted to create an inviting & joyous spot in my own neighborhood.

That opportunity began to take shape when I met my now business partner, Kevin Scheuing, and Sam Polakoff of Property Consulting, Inc. (PCI) in 2019. Kevin has a great knowledge and appreciation for Japanese cuisine. My affection for Japanese spirits was kindled after training and working in a Sake bar. Together, Kevin & I knew we could create a menu & environment that the neighborhood would be excited to welcome. With honesty & integrity we want to concentrate on respecting the flavors and ingredients of Japanese food as a gift to us.

Fire & Rice officially opened in October of 2020, and the community has been so welcoming, uplifting and delighted with what we have been offering during these difficult times for small businesses everywhere. Our aspiration was to be able to share not only Japanese food, but also beverages to our guests. That desire is even more dire now that we cannot safely serve patrons how we had normally done for so long. Attaining this license helps us increase our sales greatly so we will be able to continue sharing our flavors and joy with our neighbors. Being able to pair a glass of sake with a meal or integrate Japanese spirits in our craft cocktails, not only satisfies an ambition Kevin & I share, but also introduces our guests to new experiences & understandings.

To me, attaining this license not only means achieving a goal, but also taking on a responsibility to our community. I am incredibly grateful for the cooperation and assistance we have received from PCI, the Waltherson Improvement Association (WIA) and its members. Working together on the terms of this license has been straightforward. I believe that's because we see eye-to-eye on how Fire & Rice can serve our community, neighbors and friends. Fire & Rice will dutifully carry out all of the terms of agreement between us, WIA and the requirements of this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and time on this legislation. If for any reason you wish to contact me, please do so at 443.989.8504 or alex.d.champagne@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Alex Champagne, Co-Owner
Fire & Rice