

SB 763

March 5, 2021 @ 2:00 PM

Board of License Commissioners

Liquor Control Board of Garrett County

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March 3, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building - 11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 763 Alcoholic Beverages
Class A Licenses – Retail Grocery Establishments (Health Food Accountability Act of 2021)

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the Garrett County Board of License Commissioners, this office urges you to oppose Senate Bill 0763 Alcoholic Class A Licenses – Retail Grocery Establishments (Health Food Accountability Act of 2021). Although, we recognize that hardship some communities in priority funding areas may have with limited access to the availability of healthy foods at a retail grocery establishment, this impacts all jurisdictions and existing small business owners. The preamble to the bill outlines concerns of obesity, health risks and lack of availability to healthy food. How does permitting retail grocery establishments to sell alcoholic beverages relate to promoting healthy lifestyles. In fact, some may view it as the total opposite. This bill further takes away our local authority and states the license shall be issued and additional State annual and renewal license fees shall be paid to the Commission.

The bill does not take into consideration that there are currently jurisdictions that have existing rules, regulations and licenses available that allow a qualifying small business owner to apply for an off-sale alcoholic beverage license as long as it is not a chain store, supermarket or discount house. The allowance of a retail grocery establishment license as proposed in the bill will cause detrimental financial loss to many licensed establishments located in the priority funding areas. The bill allows the minimum of 6,000 sq ft, with only 5% dedicated to the sale of the listed food items. This seems to allow for a super-sized package store that also sells at least six of the food items listed in the bill. The section of the bill that states that delivery-based Class A license holders are not required to obtain a letter of authorization from the local licensing board to make deliveries must be considered. Alcohol is defined as a drug and is regulated for good reason and the delivery of alcohol should have guidelines and regulations in place to ensure it is sold and delivered responsibly. The language is very vague. Additional delivery regulations should be in place that restrict the delivery to only in the jurisdiction that issues the license. For the reasons stated above, we would request to be excluded from the bill.

In closing, it would have been beneficial for a collaboration with the local jurisdictions on the drafting of the legislation as it directly impacts local budgets, staffing requirements and safety of our communities. The Garrett County Board of License Commissioners requests you oppose Senate Bill 0763 and thank you for the attention you may give this legislative issue.

Sincerely,

Deborah R. Owston

Deborah R. Owston,
Administrator of the Board of License Commissioners

cc: Senator George Edwards
Delegate Wendell Beitzel