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Howard County

Economic Matters Committee

*Subcommittees*

Banking, Consumer Protection,  
and Commercial Law

Property and Casualty Insurance

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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HB0550 / SB0476 Alcoholic Beverages - Manufacturer's Licenses and Off-Site Permits - Sunset Extension

**SPONSOR:** Delegate Courtney Watson

**POSITION:** Favorable

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, House Bill 550 is straight forward but undoubtedly necessary given how fast things seem to change during the pandemic. Simply put, this bill extends the sunset from House Bill 1232 that Delegate Brooks spearheaded last session in order to allow our breweries, wineries and distilleries to deliver their product with employees and via direct shipment. This bill changes the sunset on those privileges from December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year until June 30<sup>th</sup> of 2023.

For business owners, I cannot imagine how difficult it has been to navigate the economic fallout and the subsequent shift in consumer behavior during the pandemic. This is especially true for highly regulated businesses like the nearly 250 breweries, wineries and distilleries we have in the state – who often need legislative approval for any change to their business model.

Members of the Committee, we authorized the right for these businesses to deliver and ship their product last session until December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. During the course of those negotiations the advocates and some members on this committee noted that the sunset should have been consistent with the June 2023 sunset we granted our restaurants for similar delivery privileges. At the time, the advocates also based their objection to a December sunset on the unpredictable nature of the pandemic coupled with the significant harm that could result from cutting off these privileges in the middle of the winter months.

House Bill 550 is a reasonable, fair, and appropriate measure to give these small manufacturing businesses the assurance that the State of Maryland has their backs should we have another Covid variant, like Omicron, flare up later this year. Given how we are conducting session virtually this year, I think it would send the wrong message to these businesses if we do not extend the sunset.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our discussions and respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 476.

Now I will turn things over to Brad Rifkin who represents all three associations. Thank you.