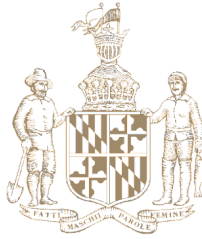


JHEANELLE WILKINS
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ways and Means Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 17, 2022

House Bill 854 - Alcoholic Beverages – Maryland Alcohol Manufacturing and Promotion

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 854 - Alcoholic Beverages – Maryland Alcohol Manufacturing and Promotion**.

HB 854 will help Maryland to better market and support our wineries, distilleries and breweries so that these industries can thrive. As you know, the Maryland Wine and Grape Promotion Fund is a reimbursable grant program to promote the production and consumption of Maryland wine and increase growth of commercial wine grapes in Maryland. HB 854 takes the existing Maryland Wine and Grape Promotion Fund and the existing “Governor’s Commission on Wine and Grape Growing,” which are both housed in the Department of Agriculture, and expands them to include Maryland’s brewing and distilling industries. The bill also shifts the Commission and the Fund over to the Department of Commerce for them to administer the Fund given their extensive expertise in tourism, marketing and overall focus on promoting the growth of Maryland businesses and industries.

Although the Fund combines the dedicated taxes of these three industries, it does not increase, reduce, or change the taxes on these industries in any other way. The new Fund in this bill is modeled on the successful marketing Fund we created for the Maryland wineries dating back to 2005.

House Bill 854 is a modest proposal to help local economic development officials, tourism agencies and non-profit organizations spotlight the very best of an industry that now consists of 253 breweries, distillers, and wineries throughout Maryland, employ 2,558 Marylanders, indirectly support approximately 31,500 jobs and creates nearly \$909.7 million in economic activity.

Notably, the Fund will support the essential role the industry plays in value-add agriculture through the research of crops that are used in Maryland produced alcohol. And importantly, the bill makes clear that the Fund can be used to help support endeavors to expand minority ownership and participation in the industry.

I have shared minor amendments on the bill that adds the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission to the Advisory Commission, and a technical clarification for eligibility to apply to the Fund for grants.

For those reasons, I respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB854.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Wilkins', with a small dot at the end of the line.

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins