



March 13, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
240 Taylor House Office Building, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB1001 - State Designations - State Cocktail - Original Maryland Orange Crush

Dear Delegate Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ruth Toomey, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maryland Tourism Coalition (MTC), the trade association representing Maryland's tourism industry. Our mission is to connect, educate, and advocate on behalf of our members, helping to elevate their businesses across the state. I am writing today to ask for your support in voting in favor of HB1001, which would designate the Orange Crush as the official state cocktail of Maryland.

Tourism is Maryland's 11th largest private sector and contributes over \$2.4 billion in state and local taxes. In 2015, the Maryland Office of Tourism launched the 5 Senses of Tourism campaign, incorporating food and beverage into the "Taste" campaign. Iconic state designations like this one have proven to help attract visitors to specific destinations. For instance, people travel to Smith Island specifically for an authentic Smith Island Cake. Similarly, in a National Travel & Tourism Week campaign, we asked Marylanders what they associate with our state—and the Orange Crush was a top response, later becoming part of the Iconic Maryland Scavenger Hunt.

While the Orange Crush originated in Ocean City, it has grown to become a Maryland-wide phenomenon, beloved from the beaches to the mountains. Queen Anne's County even promotes its Crabs N' Crushes campaign to guide visitors to places where they can enjoy both crabs and the signature cocktail. Every year, Phillips Crab Deck in Baltimore celebrates Orioles Opening Day with "O's & Crushes," and Bmore Around Town hosts a popular Crush Bus Tour, now in its 10th year. This event, which sells out annually, takes participants on a tour of Maryland venues to discover the state's best Orange Crush cocktails, introducing patrons to new venues they often return to with friends and family.

The Orange Crush is not just a drink but a part of the Maryland experience. Designating it as the official state cocktail will undoubtedly drive more tourism and strengthen the state's economy. With the current 9% alcohol tax on each Orange Crush served, passing HB1001 would create a perfect opportunity for celebratory events across bars and restaurants, boosting both food and beverage sales. Additionally, retailers such as Route One Apparel will create commemorative Orange Crush shirts, further promoting the cocktail and Maryland's unique identity.

By designating the Orange Crush as the official cocktail, we can also stimulate new campaigns within liquor stores and distributors, spotlighting key ingredients like orange vodka. As a fun side note, Deep Eddy Vodka, one of the major brands used in the Orange Crush, produces its orange vodka with Domino Sugar, benefiting Maryland's local manufacturing industry.



I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration and support of HB1001. Thank you for your time and for advocating on behalf of Maryland's tourism industry.

Sincerely,

Ruth Toomey  
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Maryland Tourism Coalition  
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