



July 28, 2020

Hon. Louis Luchini, Chair
Hon. John Schneck, Chair
Maine Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Luchini and Representative Schneck:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, a national trade association representing producers and marketers of distilled spirits and importers of wines sold in the United States in support of L.R. 3333 entitled "*An Act To Extend the Ability of Restaurants and Bars To Serve Alcohol To Go.*" As you know, this proposed legislation would allow certain beverage alcohol licensees to sell beer, wine and approved mixed drinks with a food purchase during the declared state of emergency or until April 15, 2022. Under the legislation, mixed drinks must be in sealed containers, appropriately labeled and placed in the trunk or non-passenger compartments of a vehicle.

The hospitality industry, which represents thousands of jobs in all sixteen counties has been one of the hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the National Restaurant Association, closures and reduced capacity restrictions have caused a nearly 80% reduction in restaurant sales and an 86% reduction in jobs across the country. The temporary approval of cocktails-to-go has provided a meaningful source of revenue to the many struggling hospitality businesses across the state of Maine.

Currently, more than 30 states plus the District of Columbia are allowing restaurants and/or bars to sell cocktails to-go. Iowa became the first state to make the cocktails-to-go measure permanent in June and the State of Michigan has approved an extension until December 31, 2025. In addition, Colorado, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Delaware and Kansas have all legislatively approved extensions of the cocktails-to-go privileges, while other states, including New York, Texas, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, and the District of Columbia, are considering making their policies permanent or adopting long-term extensions.

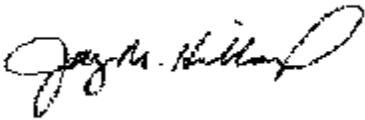
From the standpoint of responsibility, the Distilled Spirits Council industry is committed to responsible consumption and encourages moderation for adults who choose to drink alcohol. As the legislation and regulatory guidance makes clear, cocktails to-go are intended for home consumption and all laws governing alcohol consumption and the prohibitions on drinking while driving must always be observed.

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The future of the hospitality industry will be dependent upon many factors out of the control of licensees, e.g. restricted capacity measures, the uncertainty of customer comfort levels to return to eating and drinking establishments or even weather. We would urge a vote of "ought to pass" for LR3333 and swift action in any special session that may be called to address COVID-19 relief measures to provide businesses with even this small measure of certainty for the future of their operations.

We appreciate your consideration of our views regarding L.R. 3333. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by telephone at 207-831-8285, by email at jay.hibbard@distilledspirits.org or our Maine counsel Andy Hackman.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay M. Hibbard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Jay M. Hibbard
Vice President – Government Relations

cc: Members of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs