



January 31, 2023

Hon. James Maroney, Co-Chair  
Hon. Michael D'Agostino, Co-Chair  
Connecticut General Law Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3500  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Maroney and Representative D'Agostino:

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 H.B. 6548 entitled "An Act Concerning The department of Consumer Protection's Recommendations Regarding Alcoholic Liquor Regulation."

This proposed legislation contains several market modernizations that would benefit both Connecticut consumers as well as the businesses manufacturing, distributing and retailing distilled spirits products in the state. One such provision we strongly urge you to support would remove the sunset date on current law allowing on-premise retail alcohol licensees to sell distilled spirits and mixed drinks with a food purchase. Current law requires any alcohol sold for carryout or delivery to be in a securely sealed container that prevents consumption without the removal of a tamper-evident lid, cap or seal and for it to be placed in a bag by employees prior to removal from the licensed premises.

As you know, cocktails to-go were allowed on a temporary basis during the pandemic to support struggling hospitality businesses which represent tens of thousands of jobs across Connecticut's eight counties. Now, cocktails to-go have become a regular part of takeout dining for adult consumers in addition to providing stability for hospitality businesses as they continue to recover from the lasting impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, these businesses face other challenges including supply chain disruptions, staffing shortages and record-high inflation. H.B. 6548 would allow certain beverage alcohol licensees to sell beer, wine and approved cocktails to-go with a food purchase on a permanent basis.

The temporary approval of cocktails-to-go provided a meaningful source of revenue to the many struggling hospitality businesses across the state of Connecticut and extending those privileges has become integral in business practices and long-term growth. Connecticut is one of many states that has seen the benefit of the practice and is now considering making this business- and consumer-friendly measure permanent, including Maine, Vermont, New Jersey, and Illinois. Since the beginning of the

pandemic, 18 states and the District of Columbia enacted laws to permanently allow cocktails to-go, and 14 others enacted laws that extend the sale of cocktails to-go on a temporary basis.

From the standpoint of responsibility, the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States and the spirits industry as a whole are committed to responsible consumption and encourage 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.

The future of the hospitality industry will be dependent upon many factors out of the control of licensees, and this practice is something that we believe is valuable to their continued recovery and long-term growth. We encourage the Committee to vote positively on this important legislation and provide Connecticut's hospitality businesses with this measure of certainty for the future of their operations.

We appreciate your consideration of our views regarding H.B. 6548. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or our Connecticut counsel Linda Kowalski.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Smith".

Emily Smith  
Vice President State Public Policy  
[Emily.Smith@distilledspirits.org](mailto:Emily.Smith@distilledspirits.org)  
(202) 682-8802

cc: Members of the General Law Committee