



February 26, 2014

Dear Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the members of the Maine Brewers' Guild, I am writing to voice my support of L.D. 1763, *An Act to Make Available to the Public Certain Information Concerning the Alcohol Content of Malt Liquor, Wine and Spirits*.

The current law, which forbids the simple listing of alcohol percentage by volume, is anti-common sense, anti-public safety, and antiquated. In Maine today, we have over 50 breweries – 2 more have opened since I last stood before you just over a month ago. The number of bars and licensed establishments is much greater. To my knowledge, every licensed establishment owner who has spoken on this issue has come out in favor of this law change.

There is now an incredible variety of beer styles being produced in state, some of which have alcohol contents far exceeding the traditional 5.0% of the most popular macro-brewed beers like Budweiser and Coors. In the marketplace, these high ABV beers are premium products and as such command a premium price. Whereas the existing law attempts to address an outdated concern around consumers choosing a beer solely for its high alcohol content or perceived strength, the reality is that today's consumer of higher ABV beers is more of the connoisseur – one who is sampling these beers to appreciate the complexity and balanced flavor profiles these beers offer.

As craft beer gains in popularity and consumers explore the local brews available to them, it is critical that our breweries, pubs and bars are able to list and display the alcohol content of the beer to allow consumers to make informed and safe decisions around what they are drinking. In the same way the listing of caloric content allows consumers to make healthy choices, so to does a clear listing of the ABV contents.

Since this issue was raised about a month ago, the public and media reaction has been one-sided. The irrationality of the existing law has been repeatedly highlighted, and all writers have agreed that the safe and common sense solution is to allow breweries and bars to list the ABV on menus and signage. When I sent out a quick survey to the members of the Guild to ask their opinions on the issue, every respondent – comprising more than half the breweries in the state - agreed that listing the ABV was in the best interest of public safety, and indicated their desire to do so without fear of fines.

I applaud the committee and Rep. Luchini and the other sponsors of this bill for tackling this issue so swiftly for the sake of our industry and the safety of the people of Maine. I once again, on behalf of the membership of the Maine Brewers' Guild, express my strong support for the passage of LD 1763. Thank you for your time and please note I will be happy to provide any further information to the committee for the work session.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Sullivan  
Executive Director, Maine Brewers' Guild

The Maine Brewers' Guild PO Box 2817 South Portland, Maine 04116  
info@mainebrewersguild.org