



Testimony – Emma Arian, Executive Director
Vermont Brewers Association
Section 6, H.921

Thank you, Chair Birong, Vice Chair Hango, and members of the committee for welcoming me back once again. For the record, my name is Emma Arian, Executive Director of the Vermont Brewers Association, and I appreciate the opportunity to continue this conversation around H.921 and Section 6 after previous testimony before both this committee and the Senate Economic Development Committee.

The Vermont Brewers Association represents 58 breweries, more than 90 percent of the breweries in Vermont. Our industry contributes roughly \$460 million annually to Vermont's economy and supports approximately 2,800 jobs.

I am here again today in support of H.921, specifically Section 6, which would allow limited self-distribution for breweries under their existing manufacturer license.

This proposal has already moved through the Department of Liquor and Lottery, multiple legislative committees, and both chambers. The process has been thoughtful, collaborative, and transparent, with testimony from brewers, distributors, industry groups, and regulators. At every stage, Section 6 remained intact because lawmakers recognized it as a measured response to real challenges facing small breweries.

What has been especially notable throughout this process has been the collaboration across Vermont's beer, wine, and distilled spirits industries. Producers and stakeholders have worked together in good faith to support thoughtful modernization that helps Vermont manufacturers grow while preserving appropriate safeguards.

I also emailed Chair Birong and Vice Chair Hango a PDF compilation of 14 emails sent to Speaker Krowinski in support of H.921 that I was cc'd on between Sunday and yesterday morning from stakeholders across the beer, wine, and spirits industries. The breadth of support reflects how strongly Vermont producers believe this legislation is needed.

The distribution landscape in Vermont has changed dramatically. In just the past two years, Vermont has lost Craft Vermont, Vermont Beer Shepherd, and now Calmont Beverage Company. As consolidation continues, the smallest breweries are increasingly losing access to market opportunities.

Section 6 does not dismantle the three-tier system. It is a narrow and practical adjustment that allows breweries to self-distribute up to 3,000 barrels annually under their existing manufacturer license. This gives small breweries the opportunity to establish local accounts, grow responsibly, and eventually become stronger wholesale partners.

Importantly, Vermont would not be an outlier. Maine and New Hampshire already allow limited self-distribution under manufacturer licenses while maintaining healthy wholesaler networks.

Vermont has a long history of modernizing alcohol laws in ways that support small local producers while maintaining strong regulation. Section 6 continues that tradition. It is thoughtful, limited, and responsive to today's marketplace realities.

At this point, it is concerning that what feels like an "11th hour" effort by an opposing voice could delay or derail legislation that has already been thoroughly vetted and broadly supported.

As I previously testified to this committee, the proposals in both Section 6 regarding beer distribution and Section 2, regarding 4th class licenses, before they were brought to the legislature, were proposed and vetted at length by the Vermont Brewers Association with our members, our beverage industry colleagues and our regulators. Despite numerous opportunities to participate, at no time during that 12 month process were the concerns that you have heard today raised..

I respectfully urge you to concur with the changes proposed by the Senate and support the swift passage of H.921 and keep Section 6 intact.

Passage of this bill will strengthen Vermont's brewing industry and help create opportunities for manufacturers to grow their businesses....supporting jobs, local investment, and tourism across our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.