

Main Street Alliance of Wisconsin

Building a powerful, progressive, small business voice

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs-

Main Street Alliance members from across Wisconsin support Assembly Bill 32 and urge swift passage in this committee and on the floor of the Assembly. We are encouraged that this legislation is already bi-cameral and has robust bi-partisan support, including some of the most conservative and some of the most liberal members of the State House.

Wisconsin small businesses are still hurting. Our members have worked hard to keep themselves, their staff and communities safe by going curbside only or limiting in store capacity. We deeply appreciate this legislation which will help our members and small, main street businesses access to a much-needed additional form of revenue. Many bars and restaurants across our state have thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of dollars worth of inventory that they have not been able to utilize for months due to existing regulation. This bill would address that and help provide help all across our state.

That said, there is still more to do. Small businesses in Wisconsin need more access to capital, grants and support to make it through the next few months until the vaccine is more widely available. We urge the Senate and Assembly to compromise with the Governor to come up with a solution to COVID aid, especially in the case of workshare, direct grant aid, and continuing to give employers, local governments and others the flexibility needed to keep us safe.

We urge a swift vote in favor in Support of Assembly Bill 32.

I have included two additional pieces of testimony from our members, as well as a letter of support. Thank you.

Ryan Clancy/Becky Cooper Clancy, Bounce MKE and Fling MKE

We speak today as a founding member of the Progressive Restaurants and Activists of Wisconsin Network, a board member of the Milwaukee Independent Restaurant Coalition, as the owners of a small bar and restaurant, and as concerned members of the community.

This is a solid, commonsense bill which benefits our industry, our employees and our community.

We are in support of this just as we were last year, when it was authored by Senator Larson. Cocktails have higher margins than many other items sold in bars and restaurants, and often mean the difference between eking out a small profit and going under. Had this bill gotten your support when it came from the other side of the aisle in 2020, more restaurants might have survived thus far. More bartenders and support staff might still be working, and more small businesses would have been able to afford to do the right thing, to remain open only for pickup or delivery, and to have kept our dining rooms closed as public health officials have been begging us to do.

As it was, as small business owners we were forced to choose between paying our bills and employees and protecting the public health. Our employees had to choose between paying their bills and protecting the health of their families and communities. We had to make these choices because the party that controls our state legislature decided not to come to work when we needed you the most.

This bill, passed months ago, certainly would have slowed the spread of COVID, and might well have saved some of the 6,485 lives that we have lost to it.

This bill is late than never, but it's not enough. You could have passed this months ago. You could have provided aid to individuals and businesses during this pandemic. You could have refused to politicize the wearing of masks, which - aside from bringing us back to business sooner - would have clearly saved lives and communities. But here we are.

So, yes, we speak in favor of this bill, but also in favor of you doing your jobs so that we can get back to ours.

Dan Jacobs, JVR Catering, DanDan, EsterEv, Batches, Fauntleroy

It is imperative that the state gives independent restaurant and bar owners the necessary tools to get through the pandemic of 2020 into 2021. Restaurants and bars cannot return to normal until a majority of our customer base feels confident in returning to our establishments. Therefore we need every tool we can use to allow our guests to enjoy a semblance of their experience they would have had in our space while at home. That includes the ability to sell our cocktails individually alongside our food.

Cocktails, unlike a bottle of wine or six pack of beer, cannot be sold unless they are part of a kit. With a full bottle of booze and kits running north of \$50, sales are obviously not great. This bill would let us sell individual drinks for the more appropriate pricing and allow restaurants and bars another revenue stream in a time where revenue is scarce.

The bill we are discussing will by no means save restaurants and bars but the immediacy of this bill cannot be understated. We need help and we need it now!

According to the Independent Restaurant Coalition 75% of WI's 12,000+ eating and drinking establishments are in danger of closing permanently. Restaurants and bars accounted for an additional drop in unemployment for the state in December of over 1500 jobs. Show us that the State Assembly cares about the hospitality industry in WI by passing Assembly Bill 32.



Assembly Leaders and Members,

On behalf of members of the Milwaukee Independent Restaurant Coalition and the Main Street Alliance-WI which is composed of 100 plus members in across Wisconsin, as well as the undersigned individual owners and constituents, we are writing in support of passage of legislation (Senate Bill 22) to amend 125.51 (3) (a), 125.51 (3) (am) and 125.51 (3) (b); and to create 125.02 (20g) of the statutes; relating to: the retail sale of intoxicating liquor by the glass for consumption away from the licensed premises. We urge swift passage of Assembly Bill 32.

Support and passage of this bill would give bars and restaurants an additional life line of income to keep afloat during these uncertain times. Though how small this may seem, for others this could be the additional help a bar or restaurant may need to stay open. **We need to continue to support measures to help keep our industry safe, healthy and employed.** Being able to have patrons purchase these beverages to imbibe at home from their favorite dive or neighborhood joint will be one more step in helping accomplish that.

We thank you for your support.

Signed:

AJ Dixon, Owner
Lazy Susan MKE

**Ryan Clancy and Becky Cooper Clancy,
Owners**
Bounce and Fling MKE

Dan Jacobs and Dan Van Rite, Owners
Dan Dan, Ester Ev

Cam Roberts and Sara Jonas, Owners
Cafe Lulu

George Bregar, Owner
Company Brewing

Britt Buckley, Owner
Buckley's

Dan Nowak, Owner
Tall Guy and a Grill

Greg Leon, Owner
Amilinda

Suzette Metcalf, Owner
Pasta Tree

Rebecca Loewen and Lisa Duggens, Owners
Cloud Red

Edward DeShazer , Owner
White Tail- MKE, Truck Stop-MKE

Justin Aprahamian, Owner
Sanford Restaurant

John Revord, Owner
Emily Dell Revord, Director of Operations
Boone & Crockett, The Cooperage

CC:

Representative Swearingen (Chair)
Representative Tauchen (Vice-Chair)
Representative Jagler
Representative Schraa
Representative Knodl
Representative Kuglitsch

John C. Clark, Managing Partner
Public Table

Mayor Ken Tutaj
Mayor of St. Francis, WI

Steve Hawthorne, Owner
Hawthorne Coffee Roasters

Melanie Manuel, Owner
Celesta

Representative Summerfield

Representative Kulp

Representative Vorpapel

Representative Sinicki

Representative McGuire

Representative Ohnstad

Representative Stubbs

Representative Cabrera