



**Senate Economic Growth Committee Hearing  
Monday, February 10, 2025**

**Testimony delivered by:  
Eric Orlando, Exec. VP, of The Zita Group  
and Government Affairs Dir. of the Brewers Guild of New Jersey**

Good morning, Chairwoman Cruz-Perez and members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee. I am Eric Orlando, Executive Vice President of the Zita Group and Government Affairs Director of the Brewers Guild of New Jersey. I am here to testify in support of the chair's bill, S-3970, and to ask that you vote "YES" on the legislation. This legislation directs EDA, in conjunction with the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, to develop and implement a "Jersey Craft Beverage Retailer Promotion and Grant Program" to promote the sale of craft alcoholic beverages manufactured in our state and those New Jersey retailers which carry and sell New Jersey craft alcoholic beverages. This first of its kind legislation to our knowledge in NJ and possibly elsewhere would help foster stronger relationships with the bars, restaurants and liquor stores which currently sell or are looking to sell New Jersey-made products like those of our Guild members through a portion of the tax dollars paid by breweries, distilleries, cideries, and meaderies on each gallon of product they make annually.

As many of you are aware, the NJ craft beer industry has fought over the past few years to win back the rights and privileges to have on-premises environments which their customers desire and have been commonplace in other states where our main industry competition operates with less regulation and better access to market. As we attempt to put the last few years behind us, reconnect with our historic industry partners, and identify ways to further grow our industry, the next set of issues our Guild is looking to address is how to get more NJ beer carried and sold outside of our breweries by partnering with liquor stores and the hospitality industry throughout the state. As these retailers are presented products from all over the globe to sell in direct competition with those made down the block in some cases at our breweries, the Guild is supporting the idea of using tax dollars generated by our industry to help give alcohol retailers some economic resources to promote, store and sell craft beers made in our communities by NJ workers, with NJ products and with a lot of NJ pride. We expect that based on the bill as introduced, on an annualized basis, as much as \$200,000 to \$300,000 could be made available overall to retailers in grants through the account created in this bill, assisting between 100 to 200 retailers annually in the stocking and sales of NJ craft alcohol products. As more NJ beer, spirits and other products are made and sold in the future, the account will grow, providing an increased level of support for retailers for years to come. This bill shows our Guild's sincere commitment to working with local retailers to sell our beers to the benefit of both industries, putting our industry generated tax dollars towards the livelihood and success of bars, restaurants and liquor stores in



each and every one of our communities. For consumers, if this program’s hypothesis is correct, it will provide them with more local options at the alcohol retailers they typically visit, bringing in beers they possibly never had access to because of their low level of availability outside of breweries themselves.

While the Guild appreciates that the cliché of a “win-win scenario” is very much overused when advocating for legislation, we do truly believe this legislation is a positive for manufacturers and retailers alike and has become a priority of the Guild this legislative session. Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning on behalf of the Guild in support of S-3970, and I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.