

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1498 (Wicomico County Delegation)
Government, Labor, and Elections

Wicomico County - Class A Beer, Wine, and Liquor License - Alterations

This bill specifies that *before July 1, 2026*, a Class A beer, wine, and liquor license may only be issued to an establishment in Wicomico County that has been issued a Class B license and continually operating as a restaurant in the county since at least three months before the application for the license. Beginning July 1, 2026, the bill prohibits the Wicomico County Board of License Commissioners from issuing a Class A beer, wine, and liquor license to an establishment that has been issued a Class B license. The board may renew a Class A beer, wine, and liquor license for an establishment that has a Class B license that was issued before July 1, 2026. The bill authorizes the board to issue not more than one Class A beer, wine, and liquor license in a councilmanic district, and not more than *a total* of three licenses in the county; however, the board may not issue a license to an establishment with retail floor space of more than 3,500 square feet. The bill repeals the authorization for Class A beer, wine, and liquor license holders to purchase liquor for retail sale from a wholesaler. The bill establishes that the prohibition against one person being issued more than one alcoholic beverages license does not apply to a Class A beer, wine, and liquor license issued to a holder of a Class B license before July 1, 2026, as specified. The bill also makes conforming changes. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect Wicomico County operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: In Wicomico County, Class B alcoholic beverages licenses may be issued to a hotel or a restaurant, and license holders must meet specified average daily receipt ratios from the sale of food and the sale of alcoholic beverages.

A Class A beer, wine, and liquor license may only be issued to an establishment that has been issued a Class B license and continually operating as a restaurant in the county since at least three months before the application for the license. The board may not issue a license to an establishment that is a corporation or limited liability company unless the license applicant owns 75% of the total issued capital stock of the corporation or the limited liability company. The place described in the application (1) may not exceed 20% of the area normally used in the operation of the restaurant business and (2) must be contiguous to and adjoin the restaurant establishment. The board may not issue more than three licenses in the county. The license holder must purchase liquor for retail sale from a county dispensary or from a wholesaler.

Generally, more than one license may not be issued to an individual or for the use of a partnership, a corporation, an unincorporated association, or a limited liability company, subject to specified exceptions. However, in Wicomico County, this prohibition does not apply to (1) a Class 6 pub-brewery license or a Class 7 micro-brewery license or (2) a Class B beer, wine, and liquor license if the resident applicant is a resident of the county at the time of application, and the minimum capital investment in the premises is at least \$200,000 or the premises have a fair market value of at least \$200,000.

The Wicomico County Council passed resolution 23-2025 in February 2025, which established seven council districts and eliminated the two at-large seats.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 2026
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