



SPONSOR: Rep. Q. Johnson & Rep. Bush & Sen. Paradee &
Sen. Sokola
Reps. Bennett, Seigfried, K. Williams, Yearick

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
150th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 349

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 4 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

1 Section 1. The General Assembly finds and declares all of the following:

2 (1) The Centers for Disease Control (“CDC”) has determined that a novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) presents
3 a serious public health threat and has advised that asymptomatic individuals may be carriers of the COVID-19 virus
4 who may unknowingly spread the virus to other individuals in close proximity. Social distancing is required to help
5 mitigate the individual exposure to and community spread of the COVID-19 virus.

6 (2) The Governor declared a State of Emergency for the State of Delaware due to a public health threat as a
7 result of COVID-19 on March 12, 2020.

8 (3) The Governor has issued Modifications to his original Declaration, including the Second Modification on
9 March 18, 2020, which closed all restaurants, bars, and taverns only allowing them to provide food and beverage
10 service through take-out or drive through service and off premises delivery. This Modification permitted any
11 restaurant, brewpub, tavern, or taproom with a valid on-premise license to sell alcoholic beverages as part of
12 transactions for take-out or drive through food service so long as the cost for the alcohol did not exceed 40% of the
13 establishment’s total sales transactions.

14 (4) The Governor’s Nineteenth Modification, effective May 22, 2020, modified §§ 524 and 541, Title 4
15 regarding the notice and protest provisions related to the expansion of outdoor seating for food and drink
16 establishments. This Modification permitted all food and drink establishments to expand their outdoor seating for
17 serving food and drinks if certain requirements were met. The permission granted for expansion for outdoor seating
18 under the Modification expires on July 30, 2020, unless expressly extended by the State of Emergency Order or
19 modified by the Delaware Code.

20 (5) Food and drink establishments suffered significant losses as a result of their closures due to COVID-19.
21 Restaurants have lost nearly 3 times more jobs than any other industry. In April alone, food and drink establishments
22 in Delaware lost more than \$160 million in sales.

23 (6) Between February and April 2020, Delaware lost 66% of its food or drink establishment jobs making this
24 State the 3rd highest in the nation.

25 (7) It was estimated that 50,000 people in this State worked in a food or drink establishment. Over 30,000
26 food and drink establishment workers in Delaware have been laid off or furloughed since the beginning of March.

27 (8) Allowing food and drink establishments to continue to sell alcohol beverages for off-premise consumption
28 as part of a take-out, curbside, or drive through purchase of food and to extend their outdoor seating is necessary and
29 proper in order to ensure the survival of these establishments in this State.

30 Section 2. Amend Chapter 5, Title 4 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
31 insertions as shown by underlines as follows:

32 § 512 Licenses.

33 (a) Any person, who is the owner or lessee, or who is recognized by the Commissioner as being in charge of a
34 hotel, beer garden, motel, taproom, restaurant, motorsports speedway, concert hall, horse racetrack, multi-purpose sports
35 facility, club or multiple activity club, may apply to the Commissioner for a license to purchase spirits, beer, or wine from
36 an importer and to receive, keep and sell such spirits, beer, or wine either by the glass or by the bottle for consumption on
37 any portion of the premises approved by the Commissioner for that purpose. Such a license entitles a club to sell such
38 spirits, wine, or beer only to members of that club. A multiple activity club which holds such a license may apply for an
39 additional license to sell such spirits, wine, or beer to any person who is a guest of such club or of a member of such club
40 who is duly registered in accordance with a bylaw or rule of such club, approved by the Commissioner, provided that if the
41 Commissioner determines that any applicant is not a multiple activity club, as defined in § 101 of this title, the application
42 shall be denied. There shall be no age restrictions on persons permitted on the premises of a licensed multiple activity club.

43 (1) Notwithstanding any law, regulation, or rule to the contrary, any restaurant, brewpub, tavern, or taproom,
44 or other entity with a valid on-premise license issued pursuant to chapter 5, subchapter II of this title may sell alcoholic
45 beverages as part of transactions for take-out, curbside, or drive through food service if all of the following conditions
46 are met:

47 a. The alcoholic beverages for off-premise consumption are in containers which are securely closed.

48 b. Complete meals are available at all times alcohol is being served. "Complete meals" means as defined
49 in § 102, Title 4 of the Delaware Administrative Code.

50 c. The cost for alcoholic beverages does not exceed 40% of the licensee's total sales transactions.

51 Section 3. Amend Chapter 5, Title 4 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
52 insertions as shown by underlines as follows:

53 § 524 Notice of application.

54 (a) An application for a new license to purchase for resale, for transfer of an existing license, or for a substantive
55 change to a license or licensed premise shall be filed with the Commissioner's office.

56 (b) Upon filing of an application for a new license to purchase for resale or for a substantive change to a license or
57 licensed premise the applicant shall cause notice to be advertised in at least 2 different newspapers circulated in the
58 community in which the applicant will operate if the application is approved for 3 issues. One of the newspapers must be a
59 "local newspaper," as determined by the Commissioner either through rules or on a case by case basis. If the newspaper is a
60 daily newspaper, the first publication shall be made within 3 days of the filing of the application and the third publishing
61 shall occur within 10 days of filing the application. If the newspaper is a weekly publication, the first publication shall be
62 made within 8 days of filing the application and the third publishing shall occur within 22 days of filing the application.

63 (c) Within 3 days of filing of an application for a new license to purchase for resale or for a substantive change to a
64 license or licensed premise a notice shall be mailed by certified mail or first class mail as evidenced by a certificate of
65 mailing postage-pre-paid to the following entities, individuals or groups of individuals:

66 (1) Except as provided in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, all property owners within 200 feet from any point
67 on the property boundary line of the premises to which the license is to apply;

68 (2) All property owners within 1,000 feet from any point on the property boundary line of the premises to
69 which the license is to apply if the premises is located within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of a riverfront, beachfront or other open
70 water, or if the applicant intends to include space for outside dining, outside entertainment or the outside service or
71 consumption of alcoholic beverages;

72 (3) The governing body of any incorporated areas within 1 mile from any point on the property boundary line
73 of the premises to which the license is to apply.

74 (d) The notices referred to in subsections (b) and (c) of this section shall provide such information as determined
75 by the Commissioner either through duly adopted rules or on a case by case basis. The following notice will, in addition to
76 the aforesaid Commissioner approved notice, satisfy this notice provision:

77 "[Name of applicant] has on [Date of application] applied with the Alcoholic Beverage Control ("Commissioner")
78 for [Nature of application] for a premises located at [Location of the premises, including street and city]. Persons who are
79 against this application should provide written notice of their objections to the Commissioner. For the Commissioner to be
80 required to hold a hearing to consider additional input from persons against the application, the Commissioner must receive
81 one or more documents containing a total of at least 10 signatures of residents or property owners located within 1 mile of
82 the premises or in any incorporated areas located within 1 mile of the premises. The protest(s) must be filed with the

83 Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner at the 3rd Floor, Carvel State Office Building, 820 North French Street,
84 Wilmington, DE 19801. The protest(s) must be received by the Commissioner’s office on or before [state a date at least 30
85 days after the application is filed]. Failure to file such a protest may result in the Commissioner considering the application
86 without further notice, input or hearing. If you have questions regarding this matter please contact the Commissioner’s
87 Office.”

88 (e) The term “substantive change” referenced in this section shall mean any of the following:

- 89 (1) Any permanent change that will increase the square footage of the licensed premises;
- 90 (2) Any temporary change that will last longer than 60 days and result in an increase of the square footage of
91 the licensed premises;
- 92 (3) Any change that would require a variance of the Commissioner’s rules or suspension thereof and results
93 in:
 - 94 a. Live entertainment on a licensed patio;
 - 95 b. External speakers or amplifiers on a licensed patio; or
 - 96 c. Wet bar on a licensed patio;
- 97 (4) Any change in the floor plan of a restaurant licensee which would increase the number of bar seats or
98 increase the area utilized for entertainment; or
- 99 (5) Any additional circumstance that the Commissioner determines is a substantive change.

100 (f) Notwithstanding § 524(e) of this title or any other law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, substantive change
101 does not mean an expansion of outdoor seating for serving of food and drinks that meets the requirements of ¶A.2. of the
102 Nineteenth Modification of Governor Carney’s State of Emergency Declaration effective May 22, 2020, and any
103 subsequent modification thereto that increases total outdoor seating capacity, even if the State of Emergency is no longer in
104 effect.

105 § 543 Grounds for refusal of license; transfer or extension of premises.

106 (g) The Commissioner shall not grant a new license of any type and shall not grant an extension of premises of an
107 existing license of any type unless the application for said new license or for said extension is accompanied by a Certificate
108 of Compliance from the appropriate political subdivision showing:

- 109 (1) That the premises where the license is to be used are properly zoned for the applicant’s intended use; and
- 110 (2) That all necessary permits have been approved; and
- 111 (3) That the applicant has complied with all other applicable licensing requirements of the appropriate
112 political subdivision.

113 This subsection shall not apply to any application for a temporary extension of premises as authorized by
114 Commissioner rule; provided, that any such application has not been objected to by the appropriate political subdivision
115 which shall be provided with notice of the application by the applicant within 7 days of the date the application is filed with
116 the Commissioner.

117 Any extension of premises of an existing license granted by the Commissioner pursuant to ¶A.2. of the Nineteenth
118 Modification of Governor Carney’s State of Emergency Declaration effective May 22, 2020, and any subsequent
119 modification thereto that increases total outdoor seating capacity, expires on March 31, 2021, even if the State of
120 Emergency is no longer in effect.

121 Section 4. Amend Chapter 5, Title 4 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
122 insertions as shown by underlines as follows:

123 § 561 Grounds for cancellation or suspension.

124 (h)(1) Notwithstanding any law, regulation, or rule to the contrary, the Commissioner may temporarily suspend
125 any license if the Commissioner has reasonable grounds to believe that the public’s safety is at risk and that the licensee has
126 violated the provisions of any of the following:

127 a. The Governor’s Declaration of the State of Emergency Declaration.

128 b. The Second or Nineteenth Modification of the Declaration of the State of Emergency.

129 c. The Re-Opening Guidance for Food Establishments dated May 26, 2020 and any subsequent Re-
130 Opening Guidance for Food Establishments issued by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services.

131 d. Title 4.

132 (2) The temporary suspension shall be until the Commissioner no longer has reasonable grounds to believe
133 that the public’s safety is at risk, but can be no longer than 20 days unless otherwise provided herein.

134 (3) At the time of the temporary suspension, the Commissioner shall provide the licensee with notice of a
135 hearing, which shall be held by electronic, telephonic or remote means, within 20 days of the issuance of the temporary
136 suspension.

137 (4) If a licensee fails to attend such hearing, the Commissioner may continue the temporary suspension. If the
138 temporary suspension is continued, a licensee may request the Commissioner to hold another hearing which shall be
139 provided by electronic, telephone, or remote means within 20 days of the licensee's request.

140 (5) After a hearing, the Commissioner may do any of the following:

141 a. Continue the temporary suspension until a public hearing is scheduled in accordance with § 562 of this
142 title if the commissioner believes that the public safety will be at risk if the temporary suspension is lifted.

143 b. Lift the suspension if the Commissioner believes that lifting the temporary suspension will not result in
144 a risk to public safety.

145 c. Impose appropriate conditions or fines on the licensee.

146 d. Take whatever action the Commissioner believes is necessary and appropriate in order to ensure that
147 the public safety will not be at risk by the licensee. except the Commissioner may not cancel or revoke a license
148 unless pursuant to § 562 of this title.

149 § 562 Public hearing and right of appeal.

150 (a) No license shall be cancelled or suspended, or any licensee fined:

151 (1) Until the licensee has been given a public hearing by the Commissioner at which time the licensee shall be
152 entitled to legal representation and to present witnesses; and

153 (2) Unless the ground therefor shall be established by clear and convincing evidence.

154 A full and complete record shall be kept of all proceedings incident to such hearing. All testimony shall be
155 recorded but need not be transcribed unless an order of the Commissioner is appealed to the Superior Court as set forth
156 in subsection (c) of this section.

157 (b) Any order of the Commissioner relative to suspension or cancellation of a license, or a fine imposed against a
158 licensee shall become final 10 days after the licensee receives notice thereof, unless within 10 days of the date of the
159 postmark on the Commissioner's decision a written appeal is filed in the Superior Court. No bond shall be required for
160 filing such appeal.

161 (c) The appeal shall state the grounds upon which a review is sought. After the appeal is filed, service shall be
162 made by the Sheriff upon the Commissioner. The Commissioner shall certify and file with the court all documents and
163 papers and a transcript of all testimony taken in the matter, together with the Commissioner's findings therein as soon as
164 practicable but in no event later than 20 calendar days from the date of service of the appeal. The Superior Court's review
165 of an appeal shall be on the record and the Superior Court shall take into account the experience and specialized
166 competence of the agency and the purpose under which the agency acted. Further, the Superior Court's review, in the
167 absence of fraud, shall be limited to whether the agency's decision is supported by substantial evidence on the record and is
168 free from legal error.

169 (d) An appeal without bond may be taken from the decision of the Superior Court to the Supreme Court of this
170 State in the same manner as is provided in civil cases. Upon the final determination of judicial proceedings, the
171 Commissioner shall enter an order in accordance with such determination, or shall take such further or other action as the
172 Court may order. A petition for judicial review shall act as a supersedeas.

173 (e) The public hearing required in subsection (a) of this section may be by electronic, telephone, or remote means.
174 Section 5. This Act expires on March 31, 2021 unless otherwise extended by a subsequent act of the General
175 Assembly.

SYNOPSIS

This bill codifies portions of the Second and Nineteenth Modifications of the Governor's Declaration of State of Emergency due to COVID-19 concerning food and drink establishments. Food and drink establishments suffered great losses since March, 2020 due to the pandemic including millions of dollars in lost sales and the loss of an estimated 30,000 jobs in this State. This purpose of this bill is to continue efforts to try and mitigate the losses this industry has suffered. This bill does all of the following: (1) allows an entity that has a valid on-premise license to sell alcohol to continue to alcoholic beverages as part of transactions for take-out, curbside, or drive-through food service so long as certain conditions are met; (2) allows a licensee to continue to use outdoor seating for serving of food and drinks so long as the licensee satisfies certain conditions; (3) allows the Commissioner to temporarily suspend a license only if the Commissioner has reasonable grounds to believe that public's safety is at risk and there has been a violation of the law; and (4) allows the Commissioner to hold hearings by electronic, telephonic, or remote means.

This Act is effective until March 31, 2021. Any expansion of outdoor seating for serving of food and drinks that meets the requirements of the Paragraph A.2 of the 19th Modification of the State of Emergency Declaration, or any subsequent modification that increases total outdoor seating capacity, is not a substantive change through March 31, 2021 even if the State of Emergency is no longer in effect, which means no additional applications are required.