

## ECONOMIC & RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Madam Chair and Members of the Economic & Rural Development Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before your committee. I will try to be brief and then stand for any questions. Mister Chairman, I am Ruben Baca, a contract lobbyist for the New Mexico Grocers Association and I am the State Executive for the New Mexico Petroleum Marketers Association which are C-Stores. Between both associations, we have over 400 liquor licenses.

Mister Chairman, this is not the first time this issue of high cost of licenses and lack of licenses in rural communities has been raised. Supply and demand dictate the price of licenses and availability and the ability to transfer a license from one local option district to another has a big impact on availability of licenses. In 2015, House Bill 243 was introduced by Rep. Rodella which passed both chambers and was signed by the Governor. The Bill did amend the Liquor Control Act to allow the dispenser and retailer license out of local opting districts which are below the number allowed by law (under-quota). This legislation came out of recommendations from the Liquor Control Act Task Force which met pursuant to Senate Memorial 77, passed in 2013 regular session. The Task Force was convened in December of 2013 and met through 2014 and made recommendations to the Economic & Rural Development Interim Committee. The Interim Committee endorsed the consensus recommendations and developed HB 243, from the recommendations.

Thank you, Madam Chair and Members of the Committee. I will stand for questions.