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Beverage Licensees Support Bipartisan *Transparency in Music Licensing and Ownership Act*

Bill Would Establish Digital Database, Bringing Copyright Ownership & Licensing Information to the Public and Stakeholders

July 21, 2017 – Bethesda, MD – American Beverage Licensees (ABL), a national trade association representing nearly 15,000 beverage alcohol retailers, announced its support today for the *Transparency in Music Licensing and Ownership Act* ([H.R. 3350](#)). The bipartisan bill, [introduced by Representative Jim Sensenbrenner \(R-WI\)](#) and cosponsored by Representatives Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Blake Farenthold (R-TX), and Steve Chabot (R-OH), would establish a reliable, unified database of copyright ownership and licensing information for musical works.

“Beverage licensees thank Congressmen Sensenbrenner for his legacy of strong leadership on music licensing issues and his recognition that increasing transparency in the music licensing system benefits licensees and artists alike,” said ABL Executive Director John Bodnovich. “Many bars and taverns obtain licenses so that music can be legally played in their businesses. The database that this bill calls for will provide them with dependable information on which they can make entertainment choices for their businesses.”

Bar and tavern owners, who already operate in the traditionally-regulated beverage alcohol industry, understand the importance of observing laws and regulations, including complying with copyright laws for the public use of musical works. Beverage licensees generally use copyrighted musical works – either via streaming service, jukebox, karaoke, live bands, DJs, or otherwise – by purchasing licenses from performing rights organizations (PROs). Each year, these licensed beverage businesses support songwriters by collectively paying millions of dollars in licensing fees to PROs.

Under the current system, bars and taverns have no verifiable and reliable way to determine which musical work rights belong to each of the PROs. This prevents beverage licensees from making informed business decisions when it comes to purchasing music licenses and knowing what they are getting when they obtain licenses from PROs. This uncertainty can result in protracted disputes between small business owners and PROs. More ominously, it can lead to bars and taverns shutting down live music in their businesses altogether.

The *Transparency in Music Licensing and Ownership Act* would alleviate this problem through the creation of a public database that identifies entities through which musical works are licensed in a format that reflects current technological practices; is updated on a real-time basis; and is publicly accessible without charge. By establishing the database under the Register of Copyrights, and encouraging rights owners to register their works with the database, this bill will benefit all stakeholders in the music marketplace.

“This is a bipartisan issue, affecting hospitality businesses in every town, city and state across America,” said Bodnovich. “Beverage licensees have been clear that their focus is on bringing transparency to the music licensing process. The *Transparency in Music Licensing and Ownership Act* is sensible step toward that goal, and we look forward to working with Congressman Sensenbrenner to advocate for this legislation.”

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About American Beverage Licensees: ABL is the preeminent national trade association for beverage alcohol retailers. Direct retail beverage alcohol sales in the United States generate as many as 1.94 million well-paying jobs. ABL’s thousands of on-premise and off-premise licensee members are independent and often family-owned establishments. The beverage retailing industry pays over \$25.3 billion in federal taxes and \$18.36 billion in state and local taxes. To learn more about ABL, visit www.ablusa.org.