

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION**

In the matter of:

Bobby Maraj, Permittee
Rumaj Lounge
216 Crown Street
New Haven, CT 06510
bobbymaraj@aol.com

Permit No. LCA.8756
Case No. 2024-1
Backer: B & M Nitelife, LLC
Date: March 11, 2025

MEMORANDUM OF DECISION

At 9:31 a.m. on February 6, 2025, the Liquor Control Commission held a formal administrative hearing in the matter of Bobby P. Maraj, Permittee, Permit No. LCA.8756, Rumaj Lounge, 216¹ Crown Street, New Haven, CT 06510. The Backer is B & M Nitelife, LLC. Applicant and Backer shall be referred to as Respondents. This case was heard by John P. McKinney, Liquor Commissioner and Julie Datres, Presiding Officer.

Department of Consumer Protection (“Department” or “DCP”) attorney Scott Madeo presented three witnesses, Liquor Control Special Agent Michael Kula, Liquor Control Special Agent Phillip Colla, and Liquor Control Agent Ken Takahashi. The Department introduced 2 exhibits that were admitted into evidence without objection. Respondents appeared without counsel and did not present any witnesses or exhibits.

On December 4, 2024, the Department sent Respondents a Notice and Particulars alleging six charges: one count of sale to minor in violation of Section 30-86(b) or the General Statutes, 2 counts of violation of Section 30-90 of the General Statutes, 1 count of violation of Section 30-6-A24(a) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, 1 count of violation of Section 30-86a of the General Statutes 1 count of violation of Section 30-6-A9 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, and 1 Count of violation of Section 30-6-A24(f) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies arising from an incident on May 3, 2024 involving two minors.

The Commission finds the following facts based on testimony provided at hearing and documentary evidence in the record:

1. On December 4, 2024, the Department sent Notice to Respondents of the February 6, 2025 hearing. DCP Exs. 1.
2. Respondents hold a Café Liquor Permit. DCP Ex. 2. Respondents opened Rumaj Lounge in October 2022. Tr. 2:39:52 – 2:40:22.

¹ The street address on the Department’s notice (DCP Ex. 1) and the Department’s LC-18 Report (DCP Ex. 2) do not match. Due to the information from the Department’s database and consistency of “216” throughout the LC-18, it appears the address in DCP Exhibit 1 was a typographical error.

3. The Department received 3 complaints between December 31, 2023 and March 25, 2024 alleging that Respondents were selling alcohol to minors. DCP Ex. 2.
4. On May 3, 2024, the Department together with the City of New Haven Police Department conducted a nighttime high visibility inspection of the subject premises. DCP Ex. 2.
5. On May 3, 2024, Respondents were using two electronic devices at the door to scan identification. Tr. 29:46 – 30:44. One device scanned identification forms to identify the age of the person; another device scanned identification to produce Age Statement Forms. Tr. 50:31 - 51:32.
6. During the May 3, 2024 inspection, the Department discovered two minors at the subject premises standing near a consumer bar. DCP 2; Tr. 56:06 – 58:10.
7. One of the minors identified herself to the Department and disclosed that she was 18 years old and had been served an alcoholic drink by a bartender. DCP Ex. 2. Tr. 59:32 - -1:06:09.
8. The second minor identified herself to the Department and disclosed that she was 20 years old. That minor stated that another patron bought the alcoholic drink for her that she was holding. DCP Ex. 2; Tr. 1:25:24 – 1:31:35.
9. Neither minor produced the identification they used to enter Rumaj Lounge on May 3, 2024 for the Department's agents. *Id.*
10. Both minors did not complete an Age Statement Form for the Permittee while at the subject premises. DCP Ex. 2.
11. Four days after the inspection, on May 7, 2024, the Permittee sent the Department Age Statement Forms for the minors that were incomplete: neither form included the birth year for the minor. *Id.*; Tr. 44:14 – 48:16. Additionally, the format of the Age Statement Form was not printed on appropriate forms and approved by the Department of Consumer Protection but rather were in an electronic format. *Id.*
12. Both minors reviewed and signed a DCP Liquor Control Minor Field Report filled out by the agents involved in the investigation. DCP Ex. 2.
13. The DCP Liquor Control Minor Field Report for the 18-year-old states that she presented a real Connecticut driver's license to enter the subject premises. *Id.*
14. The DCP Liquor Control Minor Field Report for the 20-year-old states that she presented fake Connecticut identification to enter the subject premises. *Id.*
15. Both minors were issued tickets by the New Haven Police with misdemeanor charges for possessing alcohol. *Id.*
16. Respondents have changed their business model to now allow minors 18 years and older to enter the subject premises. Tr. 2:22:11 - 2:39:35. Respondents have

communicated with the Departments' agents regarding the requisite changes to the premises for such minors to be present. *Id.*

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ORDERS OF THE COMMISSION

1. The Department served Respondents with proper notice of the February 6, 2025 hearing.
2. Respondents violated Connecticut law as alleged by the Department as follows:
 - a. One count of violation of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 30-86(b) (Sale to minor);
 - b. Two counts of violation of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 30-90 (Minor Loitering);
 - c. One count of violation of the Regs., Conn. State Agencies § 30-6-A24(a) (Unlawful Conduct);
 - d. One count of violation of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 30-86a (Age Statement Forms);
 - e. One count of violation of Regs., Conn. State Agencies § 30-6-A9 (Permittee Responsible for Actions of Employee); and
 - f. One count of violation of Regs., Conn. State Agencies § 30-6-A24(f) (Permittee Accountable).

Despite being in business for over a year at the time of the violations that gave rise to this case, Respondents struggled to comply with the law when serving alcohol for a 21 and older crowd. Respondents have now changed their operations to allow minors 18 years and older to enter in addition to of-age patrons, a move that seems to be inviting additional problems for a busy establishment in a college town. As such, the Commission urges Respondents to take an earnest look at their operations to ensure diligent vigilance in the service of alcohol going forward. Dispensing liquor is a privilege and not a right. *Beckanstin v. Liquor Control Commission*, 140 Conn. 185, 192, 99 A.2d 1191 (1953). The Liquor Control Act grants the Liquor Control Commission a liberal discretionary power to determine factual matters regarding liquor permits and to suspend or revoke the permit after a hearing. *Balog v. Liquor Control Commission*, 150 Conn. 473, 191 A.2d 20 (1963).

Accordingly, due to Respondents' violation of the Statutes and Regulations cited in this Decision's "Conclusions of Law and Orders of the Commission" 2 a – f, above, pursuant to Section 30-55 of the Connecticut General Statutes the Commission orders:

1. Respondents shall pay a fine of \$4500 which shall be payable within 30 days of the date of this Decision;
2. The Department shall suspend Respondents' Permit No. LCA.8756 for five (5) days pursuant to Section 30-6-A8 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies as follows:
 - a. Thursday April 3, Friday April 4 and Saturday April 5, 2025; and

b. Friday April 11 and Saturday April 12, 2025.

All subsections of Section 30-6-A8 pertaining to a café liquor permit shall be in full force and effect during the suspension period including but not limited to (f).²

3. Pursuant to Section 30-6-A8(e)³ of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, the Department shall placard the subject premises.

Dated this 11th day of March 2025.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

BY:



John P. McKinney
Commissioner

Julie Datres

Julie Datres
Designated Presiding Officer

² (f) No alcoholic liquors shall be sold, delivered, offered, ordered or received during the period of suspension.

Whenever any permit is under suspension, all liquors shall be securely locked during the period of such suspension. . . .

³ (e) Whenever a permit is suspended as a result of disciplinary action by the department, there shall be placed on the permit premises in the front window facing the street, or inside of the door used as a main entrance, if such door is mainly composed of glass and such entrance is located on or adjacent to a street, a placard furnished by said department. This placard shall contain the length of the suspension and the reasons therefor. This placard shall be maintained in place by the permittee until the period of suspension has terminated. A second placard shall be displayed at such place within the permit premises visible to the public as shall be determined by the department.

Parties:

Bobby P. Maraj, Permittee
Rumaj Lounge
216 Crown Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Attorney Scott Madeo
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Scott.madeo@ct.gov

Non-parties:

Connecticut Beverage Journal, 2508 Whitney Ave., P.O. Box 185159, Hamden, CT 06518
M. Caitlin Anderson, Director, Liquor Division
Connecticut State Library, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106