

**THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE AND CANNABIS BOARD**

_____)	
In the Matter of:)	
)	
Ratnakrupa, LLC, t/a)	Case No.: 24-CC-00006
Peacock Liquors)	License No.: ABRA-096105
)	Order No.: 2025-108
Holder of a)	
Retailer’s Class A License)	
)	
at premises)	
1625 New York Avenue, N.E.)	
Washington, D.C. 20002)	
_____)	

BEFORE: Donovan Anderson, Chairperson
Silas Grant, Member
Teri Janine Quinn, Member
Ryan Jones, Member
David Meadows, Member

PARTIES: Ratnakrupa, LLC, t/a Peacock Liquors, Respondent

Raj Bommakanti, Designated Representative, on behalf of the Respondent

Shani C. Brown, Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER

INTRODUCTION

The Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Board (Board) finds that Ratnakrupa, LLC, t/a Peacock Liquors (hereinafter, “Respondent” or “Peacock Liquors”) violated D.C. Official Code §§ 25-781(a)(1) and 25-783(b) on June 15, 2024 when it sold alcoholic beverage to an undercover minor. For Charge I, Peacock Liquors shall pay a fine of \$2,000 and serve a five-day suspension that shall be stayed within a period of one year if all its employees who serve alcoholic beverage complete an alcohol training program within 3 months. For Charge II, the Board issues a warning.

Procedural Background

This case arises from the Notice of Status Hearing and Show Cause Hearing (Notice) for Case No. 24-CC-00006. *ABCA Show Cause File No. 24-CC-00006*. The Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Administration (ABCA) served the Notice on the Respondent on October 2, 2024. The Notice charges the Respondent with multiple violations, which if proven true, would justify the imposition of a fine, as well as the suspension or revocation of the Respondent's license.

Specifically, the Notice charges the Respondent with the following violations:

Charge I: [On June 15, 2024], you sold an alcoholic beverage to a person under 21 years of age, in violation of D.C. Official Code § 25-781(a)(1), for which the Board may take the proposed action under D.C. Official Code §§ 25-781(f) and 25-823(a)(1).

Charge II: [On June 15, 2024], you failed to take steps reasonably necessary to ascertain whether a person to whom you sold alcoholic beverages was of legal drinking age, in violation of D.C. Official Code § 25-783(b), for which the Board may take the purpose action under D.C. Official Code § 25-823(a)(1).

Notice of Status Hearing and Show Cause Hearing, at 2-3.

Both the Government and Respondent appeared at the Show Cause Status Hearing on November 6, 2024. The parties proceeded to a Show Cause Hearing and argued their respective cases on December 11, 2024.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The following statements represent the Board's findings of fact based on the evidentiary record. In reaching its determination, the Board considered the evidence, the testimony of the witnesses, the arguments of the parties, and all documents comprising the Board's official file. The Board credits all testimony and evidence identified or cited below unless otherwise stated.

1. Ratnakrupa, LLC, t/a Peacock Liquors (Respondent), holds a Retailer's Class A License and is located at 1625 New York Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. *ABCA Licensing File No. 096105*.

2. On June 15, 2024, former ABCA investigator Mark Ruiz coordinated with an undercover minor to conduct a compliance check on Peacock Liquors. *Transcript (Tr.)*, at 7. At approximately 6:55 p.m., Investigator Ruiz directed the minor to enter the establishment and purchase an alcoholic beverage. *Id.* at 8. ABCA Lead Investigator (L.I.) Venessa Pleitez accompanied the minor to observe the entire sale transaction. *Id.* The undercover minor picked out a bottle of Heineken and approached the clerk, Meseret Gembremeriyam to pay. *Id.* Ms. Gembremeriyam did not ask the minor for his or her identification card but proceeded to ring up the item and collect

the payment. *Id.* The minor reunited with Investigator Ruiz outside the establishment and Investigator Ruiz observed that the bottle of Heineken did not contain alcohol. *Id.* Investigator Ruiz directed the minor to enter the establishment for a second time to purchase an alcoholic beverage. *Id.* The minor re-entered the establishment, picked out a can of Corona Light Beer, and proceeded to the clerk to pay. *Id.* Ms. Gembremeriyam asked to see the minor's identification card to determine his or her date of birth and the minor presented an identification card with the date of birth listed as 10/23/2003 which is, October 23, 2003. *Id.* The transaction occurred on June 15, 2024 which indicated that the minor had not turned twenty-one years of age at the time of the purchase. *Id.* The undercover minor exited the establishment with the Corona Light Beer in his or her hand. *Id.*

3. At approximately 7:15 p.m. the same day, L.I. Pleitez entered the establishment to inform Ms. Gembremeriyam that she had sold alcoholic beverage to a minor. *Id.* She presented Ms. Gembremeriyam with the Sale to Minor Notification form in which Ms. Gembremeriyam read and signed. *Id.* At the Show Cause hearing, Raj Bommakanti, owner of the establishment, stated as a defense that Ms. Gembremeriyam misread the minor's date of birth as 01/23/2003 instead of the 10/23/2003 as stated on the identification card. *Id.* at 9. He presented on the record that Ms. Gembremeriyam was not dyslectic. *Id.* at 10. Both the Government and Mr. Bommakanti stipulated to the facts entered into the record and as a result, they waived their right to have L.I. Pleitez testify even though she appeared at the hearing. *Id.* at 6. The Respondent requested for leniency from the Board when issuing the penalty. *Id.* at 9.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

4. The Board has the authority to fine, suspend, or revoke the license of a licensee who violates any provision of Title 25 of the District of Columbia (D.C.) Official Code pursuant to D.C. Code § 25-823(a)(1).

I. Standard of Proof

5. In this matter, the Board shall only base its decision on the "substantial evidence" contained in the record. 23 DCMR § 1718.3 (West Supp. 2023). The substantial evidence standard requires the Board to rely on "such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion." *Clark v. D.C. Dep't of Employment Servs.*, 772 A.2d 198, 201 (D.C. 2001) citing *Children's Defense Fund v. District of Columbia Dep't of Employment Servs.*, 726 A.2d 1242, 1247 (D.C. 1999). It should be noted that ". . . hearsay evidence is admissible in administrative proceedings" and may constitute "substantial evidence." *Compton v. Dist. of Columbia Bd. of Psychology*, 858 A.2d 470, 476 (D.C. 2004). In that vein, "The weight to be given to any piece of hearsay evidence is a function of its truthfulness, reasonableness, and credibility." *Id.* at 477.

II. The Respondent Violated D.C. Official Code § 25-781(a)(1).

6. The Board finds that the Respondent sold alcoholic beverage to an undercover minor on June 15, 2024. Under D.C. Official Code § 25-781(a)(1), "The sale or delivery of alcoholic beverages to the following persons is prohibited: (1) A person under 21 years of age, either for the

person's own use or for the use of any other person, except as provided in § 25-784(b).” D.C. Official Code § 25-781(a)(1).

7. In this instance, the Board finds that the Respondent is liable for selling alcohol to a minor. Specifically, an undercover minor purchased a can of Corona Light Beer from the Respondent's establishment on June 15, 2024 in violation of the prohibition against selling alcohol to minors. *Supra*, at ¶ 2. For this reason, the Board sustains Charge I.

III. The Respondent Violated D.C. Official Code § 25-783(b).

8. Under § 25-783(b), the Respondent and its agents “shall take steps reasonably necessary to ascertain whether any person to whom the licensee sells, delivers, or serves an alcoholic beverage is of legal drinking age . . .” D.C. Official Code § 25-783(b). The Respondent admits and the Board finds that Ms. Gembremeriyam failed to take reasonable steps to carefully determine the age of the minor on the identification card presented therefore selling alcoholic beverage to the minor. For this reason, the Board sustains Charge II.

IV. Penalty

9. The Respondent's Investigative History shows that the Respondent was issued a warning in 2022 for the same conduct. *ABCA Show Cause File No. 24-CC-00006*. Under District law, for Charge I, the Board may issue a fine of no less than \$2,000 and suspend the alcohol license for five consecutive days. D.C. Official Code § 25-781(f). The Board issues a penalty of \$2,000 and stays the five-day suspension for a period of one year provided that all of the employees who serve alcoholic beverages must complete an alcohol training program within 3 months. For Charge II, the Board issues a warning.

ORDER

Therefore, the Board, on this 12th day of March 2025, finds Ratnakrupa, LLC, t/a Peacock Liquors, liable for Charges I and II. The Board imposes the following penalties on the Respondent:

- (1) For the violation described in Charge I, Respondent shall pay a \$2,000 fine.
- (2) For the violation described in Charge II, the Respondent shall be issued a warning.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Respondent must pay all fines imposed by the Board within thirty (30) days from the date of this Order, or its license shall be immediately suspended until all amounts owed are paid.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, in accordance with 23 DCMR § 800 (West Supp. 2025), the violations found by the Board in this Order shall be deemed one primary tier violation.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Board's findings of fact and conclusions of law contained in this Order shall be deemed severable. If any part of this determination is deemed

invalid, the Board intends that its ruling remain in effect so long as sufficient facts and authority support the decision.

The ABCA shall deliver copies of this Order to the Government and the Respondent.

District of Columbia
Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Board

eSigned via SeamlessDocs.com
Donovan Anderson
Key: ac430b96c9d5f6e4b730093d1dccc8

Donovan Anderson, Chairperson



Silas Grant, Jr., Member

Teri Janine Quinn

Teri Janine Quinn, Member



Ryan Jones, Member



David Meadows, Member

Pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 25-433(d)(1), any party adversely affected may file a Motion for Reconsideration of this decision within ten (10) days of service of this Order with the Alcoholic Beverage and Cannabis Administration, 899 North Capitol Street, N.E, Suite 4200-B, Washington, D.C. 20002.

Also, pursuant to section 11 of the District of Columbia Administrative Procedure Act, Pub. L. 90-614, 82 Stat. 1209, D.C. Official Code § 2-510 (2001), and Rule 15 of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, any party adversely affected has the right to appeal this Order by filing a petition for review, within thirty (30) days of the date of service of this Order, with the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, 430 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; (202-879-1010). However, the timely filing of a Motion for Reconsideration pursuant to 23 DCMR § 1719.1 stays the time for filing a petition for review in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals until the Board rules on the motion. *See* D.C. App. Rule 15(b) (2004).