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Hannah Crum, President
Kombucha Brewers International
424-245-5867
info@kombuchabrewers.org

KBI Champions Kombucha Brewers in New York State
Local Brands Energized for the Future

Los Angeles, CA: The future of kombucha production in New York State is bright, thanks to the efforts of a group of local brewers working alongside Kombucha Brewers International (KBI) to reach an agreement with state regulators.

On September 26, three New York based kombucha brewers and KBI met with the New York State Liquor Authority (SLA) and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, to draft regulations that would protect consumers and help to move the industry forward. Representing the kombucha industry were Jeff Empric and Todd Salansky of Bootleg Bucha, Carly Dougherty of Food and Ferments, Ryan Chaif of Bodhi Brewing, and KBI President Hannah Crum.

Until recently, state regulators were undecided on how to properly manage kombucha production in New York. The problem stemmed from confusion over whether kombucha ought to be regulated as a food or as an alcoholic beverage. Because of this lack of consensus both Bootleg Bucha and Food and Ferments received requests from the state this summer to cease operations and shift all regulatory compliance to the SLA. They were informed that the SLA intended to treat all kombucha as an over-21 product regardless of ABV, and that continued production would require an SLA license. As the licensing process requires a separate facility, expensive bonds and additional hurdles, they had no option but to suspend brewing.

In response, Bootleg Bucha engaged a lobbyist to assist in finding common ground with state officials. Discussions between the brewers, KBI, and regulators began in early August. These evolved into September's roundtable discussion at the State Capitol, where a collaborative approach was established with the common goal of establishing high standards of food safety and product handling for kombucha production. An

agreement was reached to allow continued production of kombucha tea statewide, the immediate result being that the KBI members who were told they couldn't make kombucha without an SLA license were again able to do so, provided they meet the food safety requirements put forth by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Jeff Empric, owner of Bootleg Bucha, commented, "To be given the green light and a set of regulations that are clear and attainable has been an amazing change to the kombucha landscape in New York State. Hannah's expertise and the open door cooperation from New York State was a breath of fresh air after years of uncertainty. We couldn't be happier."

New York's brewers will continue to work with regulators to streamline the process of applying for a kombucha brewing license. Since Governor Cuomo has shown very strong support for both craft beverages and locally made products, efforts are ongoing to provide active promotion and economic support for kombucha brewing in the state.

Kombucha Brewers International (KBI) is the international, non-profit trade association for the kombucha brewing industry. To learn more about the kombucha industry, or for more information on membership, please contact KBI President Hannah Crum at info@kombuchabrewers.org or visit kombuchabrewers.org