



Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association

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George Motel

Testimony before the General Law Committee

In Opposition to HB 5458 AAC Regulation of the Retail Sale of Marijuana

Good afternoon Representative D'Agostino, Senator Witkos and Senator Leone and members of the General Law Committee, my name is George Motel, and my wife and I are the owners of Sunset Meadow Vineyards in Goshen, CT. We started our vineyard about fifteen years ago by purchasing a non producing farm. We began to plant vines and for the first two years of operation we sold fruit to other CT Vineyards. Today we have over 35 acres of vines planted and produce about 5,500 cases per year. I am here in my capacity as the President of the CT Vineyard and Winery Association (CVWA) in opposition to HB 5458 An Act Concerning the Regulation of the Retail Sale of Marijuana:

From a business perspective, Connecticut small wine farms are deeply concerned with the liability that accompanies the regulation and retail sale of marijuana. Wineries are responsible for the well-being of their patrons. Since small wine farms already serve alcohol on premises, monitoring customers for yet another intoxicant such as marijuana puts a dangerous and costly burden on business owners. In the event of an accident, the winery bears the burden of defending themselves and paying the price. Furthermore, hiring and training staff to monitor and enforce a 'no smoking' policy on expansive vineyard property simply isn't feasible - especially with the inconspicuous vaping technology surfacing in other states with similar marijuana laws.

In recent years, the Connecticut state legislature has passed a number of bills that have negatively impacted small farm wineries - Sunday sales, tastings in liquor stores, etc. HB 5458 has the potential to threaten sales beyond that of any recent legislation. Researchers from the University of Connecticut teamed up with top academics in January of this year to determine that alcohol sales have dropped 15% in states with medical marijuana laws. That's a large percentage of revenue these wineries cannot make up for, and could drive good jobs and businesses out of Connecticut in a struggling economy.

HB 5458 has the potential to harm the local wine industry that has benefited Connecticut residents and tourists alike for decades and we urge your opposition. Thank you for reviewing our testimony.