



Connecticut
Vineyard &
Winery
Association

Testimony of George Motel
Before the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee
In Opposition to SB 6350

Senator Daily, Representative Staples and members of the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee, my name is George Motel and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association in opposition to HB 6350 An Act Eliminating Exemptions From the Sales and Use Tax and Lowering the Rate of Such Tax, particularly sections 25 and 26 which remove the Farmer Tax Exempt Permit.

By day I am Senior Executive for Bozzuto's Inc., but by night my wife Judy and I are the owners of Sunset Meadow Vineyard in Goshen Connecticut. We recently opened our vineyard in the spring of 2008 and have had a successful nine months of operation. Our vineyard is comprised of over 40 acres of land and was a former dairy farm we converted into what we hope will be a profitable long lasting agricultural business. One of the programs that has enabled us to open our vineyard has been the farmer tax exempt permit. Without this program most of the goods we purchase to help our farm run would be exorbitantly expensive and therefore cost prohibitive.

Farming in Connecticut is difficult to say the least, having exempt status helps us compete in a very expensive marketplace. I know the adverse impact it would have on my young business, let alone an agricultural business teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. It is vital to the success of farm businesses as well as the preservation of open space in Connecticut. The more than forty acres of land I purchased from a dairy farmer who could no longer afford to be in business could have been subdivided into numerous homes. These subdivisions would then have drawn on the tax dollar instead of contributing to it. I currently employ a number of people throughout the year to ensure my business runs effectively. I also pay sales and excise tax on the wine that is manufactured at my vineyard. All of this contributes to the success of Connecticut and the citizens who live here.

I respectfully urge you to reinstate the farmer tax exempt permit to enable Connecticut farms to compete and prosper and contribute to the State budget in the various other ways that they do. Thank you for taking my remarks into consideration.