

Testimony in Support of:

Bill No. 994 AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CONNECTICUT WINE AT FARMERS' MARKETS

Environment Committee

February 23, 2011

Members of the Environment Committee, my name is Jamie Jones and my family owns the Jones Family Farms and Winery in Shelton. Due to business matters I am unable to deliver this testimony in person, but it is very important to vineyards across the State. I am the President of the Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association (CVWA). We are a private, non-profit association of twenty (20) farm wineries from around the state. Our goal is to promote the cultivation of grapes, spread awareness of the quality wines being produced in our state and market our businesses through the Connecticut Wine Trail brochure and our website. Together our farms comprise over 2000 acres of open space and our businesses received 500,000 visits from travelers searching for local wines. We are an important part of both Connecticut's beautiful landscape and local economy. I come before you today to voice our support for SB 462 An Act Authorizing the Sale of Connecticut Farm Wine at Farmers' Markets.

Currently underway is an exciting movement by people craving for locally produced products such as Connecticut grown wine. Farmer's markets have become a popular outlet for farmers to market their products to customers who cannot make it out to the farm. Many farms and wineries are located in rural settings, away from population centers and farmer's markets allow growers to bring their produce to convenient, easily accessible locations where people can shop for their weekly food needs. Unfortunately in Connecticut, wine has not been permitted to be sold in approved Department of Agriculture farmer's markets.

The bill before you allows this to take place, but in a limited fashion. Each winery would only be allowed to sell their wine, by the bottle only, at three farmer's markets. A permit would be granted by the Department of Consumer Protection so that Liquor Control would know where permittees were selling at all times. They could then audit the locations to ensure that sales to minors was not taking place.

Many States, such as our neighbor New York, allow wine to be sold at Farmers's Markets. It provides them to showcase their locally grown product and hopefully drive patrons to the vineyard. Although there are hundreds of Farmer's Markets across the State, many are held on the grounds of a school or church. Because all local ordinances must be followed, alcohol would not be permitted to be sold at these locations. This bill would provide CT Vineyards with a unique marketing niche for their unique product. It would greatly help the community in a struggling economy as well. I urge you to support the sale of wine at Farmer's Markets. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.