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Westford Hill Distillers, LLC is a family owned and operated craft distiller located in Ashford, CT. Established in 1997 by Margaret and Louis Chatey, Westford Hill Distillers reflects an investment of our savings, innovation, and our time and energy. We founded this spirits manufacturing business on our family's property herein Connecticut, and were among the first dozen artisan distilleries in the country. Craft spirits is a growing segment of the spirits industry—there are now more than 20 craft distilleries in New England, and 350 in the U.S. Unlike many “merchant bottlers” who are licensed as Distilled Spirits Plants by the federal government to re-package spirits distilled elsewhere, Westford Hill Distillers launched with a line of spirits distilled from pure fruit on our premises. We've purchased close to a million pounds of fruit to date, most of which is Connecticut-grown fruit from local orchards. Through the years our spirits have been featured in local, statewide and national press, and have won numerous awards. Our New World Aged Apple Brandy, for example, is distilled from all Connecticut-grown apples and aged 12 years in barrel, and was judged to be the best apple brandy in the country last year by the American Distilling Institute at their competition in Kentucky. Gold medal. Best in category. Made in Connecticut.

In addition to expanding and producing our own line of spirits, we custom-distill fortifying brandies for numerous Connecticut wineries, distill brandy for a large Asian Pear grower in Pennsylvania, and produce cordials for another Connecticut-based company called PEEL, with numerous other projects in development. Our products are distributed throughout New England and in Pennsylvania. We employ three people in addition to ourselves, and our sons are in the wings ready to come on board in the next few years.

There is tremendous consumer interest in what we do, and we have requests every day for tours and tastings at our facility. When we host open houses, typically attended by hundreds of visitors in a day who come to see the distillation process and learn about our brand, we are not allowed to sample or sell the spirits we produce. This is a lost business opportunity. No business in Connecticut can afford to miss opportunities to connect with customers.

Therefore **we are in support of HB6211 THE OFFERING AND TASTING OF DISTILLED SPIRITS.** We ask you to please offer the privilege to us that is afforded to distillers in many other states in the country, and to Connecticut wineries and craft beer producers.

Westford Hill Distillers is **also in opposition to HB 6361 AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR ALCOHOL PRICING.** For the first 13 years of our business we self-distributed. We personally called on every account, selling in our locally produced spirits from Connecticut fruit. We asked these restaurants and stores—large and

small, to take a risk by giving us some valuable shelf space. They brought us in, a few bottles deep on the shelf at a time, but it was enough for us to get some traction and establish our brand.

Connecticut consumers benefit from a choice of brands at their local stores and restaurants –they're looking for unique, small-batch and locally produced products to enjoy. Single bottle pricing allows Connecticut retailers and restaurants to try Westford Hill's products on their shelf at minimal economic risk, and that helps all of us. If single bottle pricing is repealed there is no incentive to retailers and restaurants to buy just a few bottles instead of a full case.

It's tough enough to compete in the alcohol market with huge multi-national players. Small manufacturers are held to the same annual permit cost as well as per gallon alcohol tax rate obligations to the state and federal government whether we produce and sell 100 cases or 100 million. Large manufacturers wield too much control already over the buying decisions of wholesalers as well as retailers, and will continue to dominate the choice of available products if there is not a level playing field with policies like single-bottle pricing.

As members of The Connecticut Small Brand Council, we ask you to support Connecticut's independent small brand alcohol beverage manufacturers like Westford Hill Distillers, plus the wholesalers, restaurants and retailers who help us stay in business. Please allow us to compete and offer Connecticut consumers the choices they deserve. And please give us the opportunity for interested consumers to taste our products when they tour our facility.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret and Louis Chatey

Owners, Westford Hill Distillers, LLC

February 26, 2013 GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE