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Testimony in Support of: Raised Bill No. 881

***AN ACT CONCERNING FARM WINERIES***

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

Senator Doyle, Representative Baram, members of the committee,

Connecticut Farm Bureau is supportive of the emerging Connecticut wine industry. In many ways the wine business serves as a model for other forms of value-added agriculture and agritourism. It serves as a great example of how local producers can engage consumers and produce a product and experience that highlights our agricultural resources. In order to support the agricultural nature of the wine business we believe that a significant percentage of the fruit used in making CT wines should be grown in CT. Our hope is that as the CT wine business continues to mature the number of acres dedicated to growing fruit for wines will become a significant use of our agricultural land base.

The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports Raised Bill No. 881, AN ACT CONCERNING FARM WINERIES as it fixes a problem with the existing law that provides start-up wineries some relief from the percentage of permittee-grown fruit used in the manufacture of the farm winery permittee's wine in the first seven years of operation. The original intent of the existing law was to provide a means to ramp-up production while allowing the winery to operate as their fruit production increased overtime. The existing law however, allows the seven year period to "reset" with a change in ownership. This creates a situation that encourages the transfer of the winery (sometimes to related parties) and a continuation of the exemption from sourcing a higher percentage of permittee-grown fruit longer than originally intended. Raised Bill No. 881 . would eliminate the "resetting" of the seven year period with transfer of ownership.