

**STEW LEONARD'S VINEYARDS  
OF  
NORWALK LLC**

**100 WESTPORT AVENUE  
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT 06851**

**General Law Committee**

**Submission in Support of SB 82: An Act Allowing Package Store  
Permit Holders and Backers To Hold Gift Basket Retailer Permits**

February 21, 2014

Stew Leonard's Vineyards of Norwalk, LLC ("Stew's") is the permit holder, owner and operator of package stores in Norwalk and Danbury.

Stew's supports SB 82 including the amendments requested by Diageo North America as set forth in Dwayne Kratt's testimony of February 18, 2014. We had planned to have a representative present at the Committee's hearing on the 18<sup>th</sup>. We apologize for not attending the meeting; this was due to a communication breakdown.

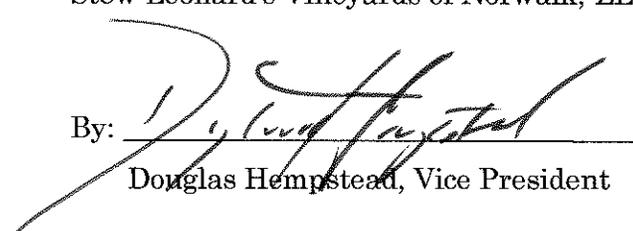
As currently enacted, the Gift Basket Retailer Permit allows the permit holder (who, for the most part, cannot be a holder of any other permits issued by the Department of Liquor Control) to sell wine in a gift basket. Thus, gas stations, florists, neighborhood general stores, etc. can sell wine gift baskets while established package stores cannot do so. This anomaly occurs because, except in very limited circumstances, a holder of a permit in one class (for example, a package store permit) cannot be a holder of a permit in another permit class (for example, a Gift Basket Retailer Permit). Each of the numerous permit types that the Department of Liquor Control can issue is deemed to be a separate class. The problem for Connecticut package stores is exacerbated by the fact that several mail order companies ship wine baskets into Connecticut, while Connecticut package stores cannot sell them.

Many customers, especially during certain holiday periods, have asked us to prepare a traditional gift basket with wine, cheese and crackers and we unfortunately had to decline, resulting either in a lost sale or a lesser sale. Further, the amendments being proposed would appear to be an opportunity for the State to increase its sales tax revenues.

Stew's thanks you for the opportunity to submit this statement in support of SB 82.

Respectfully submitted,

Stew Leonard's Vineyards of Norwalk, LLC

By: 

Douglas Hempstead, Vice President