

**Keith Bishop - CT Vineyard & Winery Association
Testimony Before the General Law Committee
March 6, 2014**

**In Opposition of HB 5426 An Act Concerning Free Wine
Tasting on Premises Where Wine Kits are Sold**



Good Afternoon Senator Doyle and Representative Baram, my name is Keith Bishop and I am a 5th generation farmer. My family has been farming since 1871 in Guilford CT. We currently grow fruits and vegetables across 313 acres. We established our winery, 8 years ago and we currently produce about 2000 cases and host over 6,000 visitors to our tasting room each year. The diversity of our farm that draws customers to buy our products from the Farm Market, Pick Your Own, Winery to our CSA provides stability that is preserving our 313 acres.

I serve as Treasurer of the Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association. The Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association consists of 27 farm wineries, spread across the state that market ourselves collectively as the Connecticut Wine Trail. The purpose of our association is to promote the cultivation of grapes and the production of wine in Connecticut.

I am here today to oppose HB 5426 An Act Concerning Free Wine Tastings on Premises Where Wine Kits are Sold. We object to this bill on the basis that there is no regulation of these kits or where they are being sold. We are not opposed to tastings, as we are advocating for similar privileges, but we feel that liquor control should be involved and noticed as to where these tastings are occurring.

In some cases wine kits could be sold from a premise that is not currently a "permitted business or location" by Liquor Control. Because they are not actually selling alcohol, just the means to make it, Liquor Control may not be involved.

CT Farm Wineries go through a rigorous set of requirements to get and maintain a liquor permit. If we are not following the rules of the Liquor Control Act, our permit can be revoked. In addition, we also carry dram shop liability insurance, which would follow us to events where tastings occur. Dram Shop liability is required of each permitted premises. This type of insurance may not be secured by these purveyors of the kits or the sites that now have people drinking alcohol at them and create further legal issues.

For these reasons we ask the committee to reject the legislation.

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