

S.B. 946 An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget

Chairman of Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Taylor Brooke Winery has been fortunate to have benefitted from three different Ag Viability grants in 2006, 2009 and 2014 for a total of \$86,000. This money went towards much needed stainless steel fermenters, a new warehouse and bottling room and covered crush pad. After purchasing 13 wooded acres for our vineyard expansion, we received 2 farm restoration grants which enabled us to do extensive preparation of the land for planting of an additional 5,000 grapevines. Without these grants, we never would have been able to grow as quickly as we have. These funds have helped us create a more efficient business, thereby allowing us to handle the continued demand of our industry. These projects have created jobs; both on our payroll (vineyard labor and tasting room associates) as well as a large number of support businesses which support our growing business.

Taylor Brooke Winery is a tourism attraction in the Town of Woodstock. We attract approximately 10,000 people from May-December. Many of our visitors come from CT, but approximately half of our visitors are from MA & RI. That means we are attracting people from out-of-state to spend money in CT. Many wineries attract a great many people from out of state. This fact is important; farms open to the public, especially the farm wineries are increasingly driving the tourism industry in CT. Continuing to make available the grants under the CIA will allow more farms and farm wineries to expand their operations so they can accommodate the ever growing interest in the public for CT Grown products. These grants help our farms diversify and therefore, keep farmers farming rather than selling their land to developers. The retention of the CIA funds will solidify CT's commitment to agriculture.

Another key program that the CIA funds have supported is the CT Wine Development Council, on which I currently serve. This council has been instrumental in the growth of the wine and grape growing industry in CT and has funded the very popular tourism magnet; The Passport to Connecticut Farm Wineries. The mission of the Council is to promote grape growing in the state and to help existing wineries increase sales and awareness through marketing. Many of our neighboring states provide similar or more help to their wineries, recognizing the multiplier effect that wineries have on their economy.

In short, these grants have helped us create a vibrant agricultural business that employs more people, pays more property and excise taxes, collects more sales tax, helps drive people to surrounding businesses, helping the economy of the Quiet Corner as well as the State of CT.

I would like to thank the Legislature for their past support of the CIA and hope that the funding continues in the future to help others like it has helped us. **We are an example of where those investments have had a real ROI...return on investment for us and the State of CT.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Auger  
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