



## Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association

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### George Motel

#### Testimony before the Environment Committee

#### **SB 384 AAC Application of the Bottle Bill to Wine and Liquor Bottles for Purposes of Funding State Parks**

Good afternoon Representative Albis and Senator Kennedy and members of the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee, my name is George Motel, and my wife and I are the owners of Sunset Meadow Vineyards in Goshen, CT. We started our vineyard about fifteen years ago by purchasing a non producing farm. We began to plant vines and for the first two years of operation we sold fruit to other CT Vineyards. Today we have over 35 acres of vines planted and produce about 5,500 cases per year. I am here in my capacity as the President of the CT Vineyard and Winery Association (CVWA) in opposition to SB 384 AAC Application of the Bottle Bill to Wine and Liquor Bottles for Purposes of Funding State Parks.

CT wineries are small family run businesses, with a different niche than most other alcohol purveyors. We are our product's grower, manufacturer, distributor, retailer and we are a tourist destination.

Adding a deposit will be very cumbersome and expensive for our industry. Currently there is no infrastructure to support the pick up of returned bottles from restaurants and package stores. Since we self distribute we would be obligated to retrieve those bottles, which would make the cost of our product significantly increase. In addition we would have to redesign our labels to reflect the deposit.

Adding a \$.15 deposit onto wine bottles, is really a tax on consumers. CT purveyors of wine are already in steep competition with surrounding States that have repealed sales tax on the product. Adding additional costs, such as a deposit, will continue to drive consumers cross border or to on line retailers that do not have these added costs.

Wine bottles are already being recycled through curbside recycling. Two States, Minnesota & Delaware, recently repealed their bottle laws in favor of curbside recycling. It is far less costly and a much more efficient way of recycling, especially for wine, when the majority of it is consumed at home.

We respectfully ask you to reconsider expanding the bottle law to fund State Parks. No one loves open space more than wineries, but putting a tax on the product we grow and manufacture is not the answer. Please help keep CT liquor market competitive and oppose SB 384.