



March 2, 2018

Mr. Chairman, committee members,

I am writing in support of H.B. 5036 – An Act Promoting Craft Breweries and Distilleries and Price Fairness. As a Connecticut resident, I thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of House Bill 5036.

This law is good for everybody, brewers, consumers and distributors. Selling more beer in the taproom will yield higher margins for the brewers and more choices for the consumer. With better margins come brewers who can scale up production to distribute through the three-tier system and do so more quickly. Distributors will benefit from having more beer to distribute from a wider array of brewers..

The proposed bill has an impact on me personally and as a farmer.

I own and run the largest hop farm in the state, Pioneer Hops of Connecticut. I also represent two other commercial hop yards, Smokedown Farm and Thrall Farm. We sell our hops exclusively to Connecticut craft breweries. Together, we employ dozens of Connecticut residents as managers, supervisors and hands.

Our hops have been very well received in the market and brewers appreciate the fact that the Connecticut sun, soil and water create distinct flavors and aromas.

The typical American hop farm covers more than 1,000 acres. The three farms I represent total less than twenty acres. Due to that small scale, we must charge a premium for our hops. Therefore, our clients need to run their businesses at margins that can afford them the luxury of buying hops grown in Connecticut.

Limiting the amount of beer a brewer can sell severely crimps the margins of most first-year brewers, whose main and often only source of revenue is the tap room, and puts the state at an economic disadvantage compared to our neighbors. Removing sale limits will help increase margins across the industry and will allow brewers to continue to buy locally-sourced ingredients.

As a consumer, I spend virtually 100% of my beer dollars on Connecticut beers. I have watched the Connecticut craft beer industry explode over the last five years and I am constantly amazed at the quality and variety of the beers on tap at the breweries. Though I am frustrated that my purchases are so limited that I cannot even acquire enough beer for a cookout without visiting several breweries.

Also, it is inconsistent that Connecticut vineyards are able to retail an *unlimited* volume of wine to customers and brewers are limited to *19 cans* to a given person on a given day.

Thank you.

Doug Weber
Owner, Pioneer Hops of Connecticut, Morris, CT
Resident, Westport, CT