



## Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association

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**Jonathan Edwards**

### **Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee**

#### **In Opposition to S.B. 1 AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, Senator Osten, Representative Hall and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Jonathan Edwards, and I am the owner of Jonathan Edwards Winery in Stonington. My parents and I started our winery about 19 years ago and now have 20 acres of vineyards here in the state.

I am writing today on behalf of the Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association (CVWA). We are a private, non-profit association of 24 vineyards and wineries across the state. Together our farms comprise over 1,500 acres of open space, and our businesses host over half a million visitors per year. We are an important part of not only Connecticut's beautiful landscape but also its local economy.

While attractive on the surface, S.B. No. 1 as it currently stands is too broad, too rigid in structure and far too costly. It is for these reasons I urge you to oppose the bill in its current form.

Most basically, neither the state nor its small businesses can financially support this proposal. The Office of Fiscal Analysis projects it could cost the state up to \$20 million just to get the program underway. This would cost the state \$500,000 per year in loans as well as additional funding to pay back. As it is, our state already has the highest debt service cost of all 50 states.

On top of the high start-up costs and the near guarantee of digging Connecticut further into debt, this proposal has an inflexible and unsustainable structure and will end up burdening our taxpayers.

As a small business owner and proud Connecticut resident, I implore you to think about the implications of Senate Bill 1 and the hardships it would place on businesses in our state. Many of the state's vineyards and wineries are small, family-owned and operated businesses, not your typical corporate entities. We simply cannot afford the increased employer costs that come with this bill.

In conclusion, the state is financially in no place to implement this type of legislation—legislation that will only serve to worsen its fiscal health, cripple the wellbeing of small businesses across the state and further afflict our taxpayers. In order to properly heal, Connecticut needs an environment where businesses can flourish now and into the future. Please reject Senate Bill 1.

Thank you.