



Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association

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**Testimony submitted by
Jonathan Edwards
President**

**Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association
General Law Committee Public Hearing
Thursday February 4, 2021**

HB 6101: An Act Concerning Various Issues Related To The Liquor Control Act

In **SUPPORT** of section 55 of H.B. 6101 with an addition of a 10% shelf space set aside for CT farm wineries products or other mechanism to ensure representation of CT farm wine products on grocery stores shelves.

The CVWA is in strong support of section 55 of H.B. 6101 if it includes a mechanism to ensure that our small family-owned CT wineries will have representation on grocery store shelves. Grocery stores, many of whom are also family-owned CT businesses have expressed support for this measure and their willingness to set aside space on their shelves to market our products.

There are many reasons that we seek to sell our wine in grocery stores and feel that it is good for Connecticut consumers.

Open marketplace for CT farm wine products and wine in general for CT consumers

Connecticut consumers continue to seek convenience when making their purchases. As most wine is consumed at the dinner table, by having wine available where consumers purchase their food, shoppers are able to purchase their food and wine at one stop if they so choose.

Brand awareness with CT consumers

CT farm wineries are keenly aware that CT consumers are being inadvertently conditioned toward purchases of beer, malt beverages and hard seltzers that are front and center in each grocery store. As wine is not currently an option and our products are not present for consumers to see and consider purchasing, we are at a distinct disadvantage in attracting the attention of CT consumers.

Parity between the CT wine and CT brewing industry

The Connecticut legislature has been working toward creating parity between the wine, beer, cider and mead manufacturers as witnessed by the enactment of PA 19-24 (SB647). This legislation has leveled the playing field in many ways between our industries, yet one only has to walk through a grocery store stocked with beer and hard seltzers but devoid of wine to see that true parity has not been reached. Passage of section 55 of HB6101 will create equity between our industries. This is consistent with current legislative actions.

Ensure CT farm wine is available to consumers during a crisis like COVID

During this pandemic the wine industry was hurt in many ways. Our tasting rooms were closed completely, then had reduced occupancy and are now mandated to require a full meal purchase with any on premise wine consumption. Events have been cancelled. Sales to restaurants plummeted. Sales to breweries plummeted. Although package stores were deemed essential, they easily could have been deemed non-essential. In this scenario, with our inability to sell wine in grocery stores, it became glaringly obvious that our sales outlets were almost none.

Cash positive for the state (certainly not negative) and popular with CT consumers

Polling data taken by the Connecticut Food Association has shown that 70% of consumers would like wine to be available for sale where they purchase food. It is highly likely that CT will see increased sales tax and excise tax revenue.

Good for CT farms, farmers and open space

Should CT farm wineries products be mandated 10% of shelf space or a mechanism enacted to ensure our wines are available on grocery store shelves, it would incentivize our industry and drive sales. This would inevitably lead to increased rates of farming, preservation of prime agricultural lands, purchasing of additional agricultural land and provide valuable open space in our state. This would be a huge driver for Agri-tourism in the state with the ripple effects in lodging, meal purchases etc.

Modernize our industry

Wine is currently available for sale in grocery stores in 40 states with 3 in New England. Connecticut has been working hard to modernize their liquor laws and allowing wine to be sold in grocery stores continues to move our state in that direction.

Our **support** of section 55 of H.B. 6101 with a mechanism to ensure that CT farm wineries products have a shelf set aside in grocery stores would be a lifeline to our industry. It is popular with consumers and would provide equity in the marketplace for the sale and marketing of our products.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Edwards, owner Jonathan Edwards Winery, President CVWA