Joseph Family Markets, LLC

February 2, 2023

H.B. NO. 5918
Session Year 2023

My name is Chuck Joseph, President and COO of the ShopRite of Canton, which I own and operate along with my dad. I want to express my gratitude and excitement at the raising of this bill and the opportunity to submit oral and written testimony. Through this process, I hope we may refine the bill with some revisions that work for all parties.

At ShopRite of Canton, everything begins with our Purpose: to care deeply about people, helping them to eat well and be happy. We put people at the center of all that we do, including our associates, our customers and our community. We serve nearly 20,000 customers per week from communities across the Farmington Valley, including Avon, Simsbury, New Hartford, Barkhamsted, Farmington, Unionville, and Burlington. We anchor the largest retail property in Canton and provide career opportunities for our 148 associates. We also believe in supporting the community that supports our store through volunteerism, financial support and product donations, including over 25,000 meals donated to Foodshare in 2022. We know that grocery stores are important fixtures in communities, providing fresh food at affordable prices, career opportunities for community members and important tax revenue at both the local and state levels – and we take that responsibility very seriously.

More and more, our customers are looking for convenience, which we know means the ability to purchase all the items they need, quickly and easily, at an affordable price. The customer demand for convenience has inspired us to invest in additional self-service options throughout our store, including freshly Prepared Foods for those on the go. The response to our convenience offerings throughout the store demonstrates the importance of frictionless shopping to the consumer. This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when grocers and their teams worked courageously to adapt to the quickly changing needs of our customers.

That is likely why, according to a recent UConn Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy economic study, over 60% of consumers who favor wine in grocery stores agree that wine in grocery stores will be more convenient for them, and over half say wine in grocery stores will save them time. These are just some of the reasons that 82% of Connecticut voters support the sale of wine in grocery stores.

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As a consumer of wine myself, and a loyal patron of some outstanding package stores, I was relieved to learn that package stores are unlikely to be negatively impacted by the sale of wine in grocery stores. In fact, in Tennessee, the number of package stores has increased since a law was recently enacted to permit wine sales in grocery stores. Similarly, the UConn study data suggests that wine sales are likely to grow across all channels due to increased marketing in the state.

With the data demonstrating that package stores are unlikely to be negatively impacted by the availability of wine in grocery stores, I would like to suggest modifications to the bill that enhance our ability to serve Connecticut consumers. Specifically, I suggest allowing grocery stores to sell all wines, not only wines produced by "small wineries." Under the current language of the bill, wineries producing over 100,000 gallons per year would be excluded from sales in grocery stores. With such restrictions, grocery stores would not be able to sell the top 20 most popular wine brands in the United States, according to data from the American Academy of Wine Economists. According to their sales data, the 20th ranked wine brand is over 10 times the size threshold established in the current bill, indicating that many more popular wines would likely be unavailable to grocery store customers.

Therefore we recommend eliminating the "small winery" definition from the bill and allowing grocery stores to offer a complete assortment that will be satisfying to the consumer. As someone who has studied wine and earned a Level 1 Certification from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust, I am aware that pairing wine with food will help to enhance the meals that our customers prepare and serve.

Thank you once again for raising this bill and conducting a public hearing to learn from your constituents. We appreciate your attention and thoughtful consideration as this discussion continues to identify solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Joseph III,
President and COO, Joseph Family Markets