

Abbey Willard H.128 Testimony Notes

2/14/2024 – House Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry Committee

Farming is changing and to survive ag businesses are investing in innovation to ensure viability

- We used to see mostly primary ag producers – grow a crop, raise animals, sell milk
 - o As the economics of farming and consumer preferences have shifted, producers have delved more into the value added production, invested in diversification, built on-site processing capacity, offered more on-farm activities, prioritized direct sales opportunities, and exploring agritourism connections with consumers
 - o And our regulations really havent fully adapted to these industry adaptations

Here is where H.128 AOFB changes offer opportunities for farms

- 1) Allow a farm to diversify from primary producer to offering value-added products and other farms diverse products
- 2) Expand existing or build new facility space to include processing based on increased market demand
- 3) Tap into agritourism opportunities and share the farming experience with visitors
- 4) Market the Vermont brand
- 5) Crop failure recovery – an example we havent highlighted until recently

The standard reasons to encourage AOFBs:

- Spurs rural economic development,
- Connects communities to local farms and access to local food,
- Maintains our state's open land remains in productive agriculture use,
- Helps farms be potentially profitable and resilient