



*Vermont Growers Association
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vermontgrowers.org*

House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs
Representative Michael McCarthy, Chair
Vermont General Assembly
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Chair McCarthy and Honorable Members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs,

Good morning Committee, and thank you, Chair and Committee Members, for allowing me time to testify before your Committee today on Bill H.549, An Act Relating to the Siting of Outdoor Cannabis Cultivation.

For the record, my name is Geoffrey Pizzutillo, a long-time indoor natural cannabis farmer and the Cofounder and Executive Director of Vermont Growers Association, the state's cannabis trade association. We formed in 2019 as a member-based nonprofit, and though we have growers in our name, we represent the entire supply chain with over 80 members, from retailers, growers, and manufacturers, to non-plant-touching businesses that service and support the adult-use cannabis market, such as security companies. VGA is a founding member of the Vermont Cannabis Equity Coalition, which includes the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance, Green Mountain Patients Alliance, NOFA- VT, and Rural Vermont. Collectively, the Vermont Cannabis Equity Coalition serves and represents the communities in Vermont most impacted and with the greatest stake in the adult-use and medical cannabis markets. I will be testifying today as a member organization of the coalition and as Vermont Growers Association.



The Vermont adult-use market is quickly approaching its third year, and its revenue has become a significant contributor to State revenue, underscored by total sales surpassing State projections and the cannabis excise tax surpassing the alcohol excise tax in May 2023. With that coming milestone, the Cannabis Control Board has issued over 200 outdoor and mixed-use representing a significant portion of cannabis production for Vermont. In its current form, Bill H.549 proposes a blanket prohibition on outdoor cultivation in areas with a population density above 500 persons per square mile and property connected to municipal water and sewer, which is far too overreaching and will place at risk those hundreds of licensed family farms and businesses that operate outdoors, severely affecting the entire supply chain.

Bill H.549 in its current form would also harm the equitability of the adult-use market, which conflicts with the original intent of the enabling statute, Act 164 (2020), to form “an independent commission named the Cannabis Control Board for the purpose of safely, equitably, and effectively implementing and administering the laws enabling access to adult-use cannabis in Vermont.” By blanketly prohibiting outdoor cultivation in areas with a population density above 500 persons per square mile or property connected to municipal water and sewer, Bill H.549 would significantly reduce the overall accessibility of the market for current and prospective small farms and businesses impacting equitability for the entire industry.

The siting of cannabis cultivation in densely populated areas of Vermont is an important conversation to have, but Bill H.549 in its current form is inappropriately overreaching and this issue warrants greater discussion and a thorough assessment of the potential impact of any proposed solution. We ask you to consider opposing Bill H.549 in its current form and recommend the CCB assess this matter through a legislative report or by continuing the discussion in the State House by continuing to hear from all sides of the issue – from townspeople and elected officials in different municipalities across the state, to outdoor and mixed-use licensees themselves.



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Thank you for your time today, and please consider the Vermont Growers Association and the Vermont Cannabis Equity Coalition as resources for all matters related to cannabis for Bill H549, H.612, and any other cannabis-related legislation.

Thank you,

*Geoffrey Pizzutillo
Executive Director and Cofounder,
Vermont Growers Association*

Cc: Brynn Hare, Executive Director, Cannabis Control Board