

My name is Emilie Paquette and I am an aspiring business owner looking to apply for a small cultivators license. I live in Burlington with my family. My most recent professional endeavor was as a Real Estate agent, but much of my time over the past few years has been spent raising my young children and helping to support the growth of my husband's local business.

As my children have gotten older and our family business has begun to expand, I have spent a good deal of time thinking about what it is I would like to do professionally at this new juncture in my life. It is very important for me to do something that I find interesting, challenging, beneficial, but that most importantly brings myself and others joy in life. I am looking to create something that I can be proud of and that will help to support my family and that of those who work with me.

Our current family business is one that supports and reveres the work of small cultivators of a different kind of plant; grape vines. Through learning about the production of wine and its retail, I have gained a respect for the process of growing, creating a beautiful product, using carefully chosen methods of cultivation and honoring the stories that weave it all together. I see the connection that small-scale cannabis cultivation has with the process of producing beautiful and lovingly crafted small batch wines. I know a fair amount about wine, and admittedly less about cannabis. The past handful of months I have been doing as much as I can to educate and prepare myself for this adventure; reading books, listening to podcasts, learning to grow, speaking with industry professionals and even enrolling in UVM's upcoming class for a certificate in Cannabis plant biology. I am currently finishing up my business plan for my LLC, Florious, which will be a woman owned and operated business. My vision for the company is to be a small craft producer of high quality flower. We will embody a spirit of joy in living the small moments in life and seek to support a Vermont lifestyle brand while focusing on the unique needs of women consumers.

I want to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon and thank you for all of the time and effort you have put into thinking about how to structure the different fees associated with licensure in the state of Vt. The consideration given thus far as to how these fees will impact the business owners, consumers, community and the state at large are apparent and examine multiple angles.

In regards to the fee for the intent to apply application and the initial application, I find both fees to be fair and accessible. I appreciate the thought given to allowing people to apply for a provisional application. There are many costs associated with starting your business and it is nice to know that should your provisional application be denied, you will know this information before having to finalize real estate agreements and business plans. It allows the applicant to have some room to breathe and space to pivot and make changes to their course, if necessary.

I also like that the fee for the “intent to apply” application, pending acceptance, will be put towards the total cost of the initial application.

As I mentioned, I am looking to apply for a small indoor cultivator’s license (1,000 sq ft or less). The application fee in proposal A, \$4,000, is significantly higher than that of those in proposal B and C. A fee of \$4,000 coupled with the other money needed to get up and running could be a stumbling block on the pathway to application for many people. While it may not be an impossibility for me, it could be seen as prohibitive by applicants struggling to raise capital for funding their projects within an arena that is not conventionally funded. The fees of \$1,500 in proposal B and C are much more reasonable and I would not view them as a barrier to entry. Additionally, I would like to say how much I appreciate the consideration given to breaking licenses out into tiers for each category. I find that it is really easy to understand the breakdown of information and can see that thought has been given to structuring the fees with a mind toward fairness and support of the “little guy” wanting to bring the craft product to market.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.