

For the record, my name is John McCann and I co own North Branch Vineyards with Representative Kate McCann.

Thank you for providing me the time to speak to you today in reference to H.813

North Branch Vineyards is an international award winning small winery based in Montpelier VT and we have been producing grape wines grown in Vermont over the past 16 years. Currently, we cultivate 3200 grape vines including 7 varieties on our 13.7 acre farm in Middlesex, VT, which was planted in 2018. .

In past years, we purchased grapes while our vineyard matured and we produced roughly 6000 to 10000 bottles annually. In 2023, two natural disasters hit our Middlesex vineyard like many tree fruit growers in Vermont. We did not produce any wine from our Middlesex vineyard in 2023 because we lost 80% of our vines to the May 18th freeze and the remaining 20% to the excessive rain in July and August. We expected a full crop in 2023 since the vines were fully mature and if we had no natural disasters, we would have picked 40,000 lbs. of grapes and produced roughly \$317,000 in value added wine.

The natural disasters set us back at least two years in revenue and we were forced to seek financial assistance. Unfortunately, the Federal government did not provide any assistance. We were awarded grants provided by BEGAP, NOFA-VT and The Vermont Community Foundation. The grants were extremely needed, but were not enough to cover our losses.

I am asking the committee to add grape vines to this bill to help vineyards in Vermont who lost their crop in 2023.

Thank you for your consideration.