



February 11, 2026

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

I am the President of the Vermont Grape and Wine Council (VGWC), the professional organization representing winegrowers in Vermont. I am also the Director of Operations and Co-Owner/Founder of Ellison Estate Vineyard, a 50-acre regenerative farm in Grand Isle with 14.5 acres of grapes under vine. In addition to our vineyard, we manage a flock of 40 sheep as part of our diversified agricultural operation. Our production winery space is currently located in Stowe. We operate a year-round tasting room in Stowe under a First-Class license and a seasonal tasting room on our farm in Grand Isle under a Fourth-Class license. We are in the process of submitting an application to expand a portion of our wine production to our farm in Grand Isle. At present, we produce approximately 1,200 cases of wine annually, with plans to increase production to 2,000–2,500 cases per year.

I believe I can offer perspective on H.647 both as President of the VGWC, representing the broader wine and grape industry in Vermont, and as the owner of a relatively new winery and vineyard that would be directly affected by this legislation. It is important to note that most wine producers in Vermont are farmers as well. Many of us do not have the luxury of operating our farm, winery, and tasting room at the same location.

I will keep my remarks brief and am happy to answer any questions related to this bill. Rob Knapik and David Keck provided a thorough introduction to H.647 and testimony previously. The VGWC supports this bill. It represents two modest changes that would provide wine producers with greater flexibility to sell our value-added agricultural products in our rural state.

The Vermont wine industry remains in its infancy. If it is to grow, we must make it easier for producers to showcase and sell their products. Under current law, there are limitations that producers are experiencing, and we are seeking more sustainable business models in our rural setting. These changes would help us achieve greater parity with the allowances provided to brewers in our state who currently hold 2 first class licenses, while maintaining appropriate regulation and state oversight.

Vermont wine has the potential to become an important agricultural value-added product and to significantly increase tourism revenue in our state. We hope to see the industry grow similarly

to other cold-climate viticultural regions, such as the Finger Lakes in New York, and in a manner comparable to the success of the craft beer industry in Vermont. As our industry grows, so too does our ability to create employment opportunities in rural communities.

In recent years, the VGWC has seen increased participation and engagement among its members. We are actively seeking ways to help wineries establish and maintain more successful tasting rooms. We would welcome the opportunity to see this emerging industry flourish, expand tourism, and elevate Vermont's food and beverage culture.

Supporting Vermont wine and its establishment as a viable industry will also help ensure the long-term sustainability of Vermont's agricultural lands in a changing economic and environmental landscape. Building successful rural businesses is not easy, and we hope these proposed changes will help Vermont winemakers establish stronger, more sustainable operations.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I am happy to answer any specific questions. Feel free to reach out via email, [info@eevwine.com](mailto:info@eevwine.com), or cell (802)-760-9111.

Sincerely,



Kendra E.F. Knapik

President, Vermont Grape and Wine Council

Director of Operations & Co-Owner/Founder

Ellison Estate Vineyard