

Hello,

My name is Cynthia Pudan Silva, I am currently a mixed tier 1 cultivator, Co-Founder of Snowbird Botanicals, and as much as I would love to cultivate this plant organically for the rest of my life, I'm not sure how long it would be possible in this market. We enter this year putting our efforts into making some of the changes we need to thrive in this market, because living in survival is not sustainable.

As one of the first 10 cultivators to get licensed in the state of Vermont, we can understand why over 100 cultivators have relinquished their license to date, and there will be many more to come. Every year packaging supplies, gas, groceries, life etc. all get more expensive, and yet, the price for our cannabis goods is expected to go down, and to further drop throughout the season. And every season we pivot, we push forward, and we persevere through storms, floods, droughts, and everything else we have to survive in this market.

Motivation wears thin when you are fighting against going out of business pricing. When tier 4+5 cultivators can provide more than enough flower for the entire state of Vermont, they can afford to sell it at a price that would take tier 1-3 cultivators out. It's no competition, we simply cannot survive against these barriers. Retailers trading shelf space not backed by true demand for the product hurts small farmers that don't have shelf space to offer at their own retailer. There are protections against this in alcohol, there should be the same for cannabis.

We keep overhead costs skeleton thin by not having a full time employee that we desperately need, but can't afford consistently. We don't have a distributor or manufacturer making new products for us; we only sell flower and prerolls because the manufacturing costs have been impossible to even have a chance at creating new products. We haven't had a salary or stability in 6 years because we were growing Hemp before Cannabis, and everyone knows how impossible that market was. We held out in hopes that we would be one of the first farms licensed for adult use, and we made it through in 2022. It is now 2026, and renewing our license is a daunting decision every year we don't make lightly.

We process, print and package our own items, and then we deliver them. Ranging anywhere from 1-4 hours roundtrip for 1 dispensary - without any payment for delivery I might add. It is a brutal schedule keeping up with farming while processing and packaging orders. It's been 4 years without being able to scale up, because growing our overhead might mean closing down in a market like this with an uncertain future.

Without a concerted effort in building a sustainable cannabis market in Vermont, we are doomed to the same capitalistic pitfalls of exploiting farmers for their hard labor, while making wealthy investors richer. Ultimately the mom and pop companies will have an uphill battle against multi-investor operations that vertically integrate, and create more investment opportunities for themselves as they profit more.

We chose to build our farm and homestead in Vermont because of the way it protects nature and small businesses alike. We left Florida during the lockdown and have never looked

back. Our values aligned with Vermonters, and we believed that starting our homesteading journey here would be the best future for us. We trusted that Vermont would protect small farmers and business owners, and allow them the opportunity to thrive. Those hopes were dashed in a heartbeat when we saw the size of some of these licenses. Big enough to supply the whole state with flower, when less than half the population actually buys their flower from a legal source according to Whitney Economics (www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/whitney-economics-cannabis-business-conditions-survey-results-indicate-only-27-3-of-us-cannabis-operators-are-profitable-302204870.html).

Direct to consumer sales for farmers are crucial to continuing their business. It is not viable to have cultivators only sell to retailers and have no contact with people who consume their goods. It leaves farmers at the mercy of this market with no leverage to negotiate prices. A retailer can have an ongoing monthly order with you for a certain amount, and then turn around and tell you one day that they'll only do the same quantity for a lower unsustainable price. There are retailers practicing net 7 or more without letting their farmers know and simply giving a check with a future date on it with no discussion or respect for creating a contract on how to do business. There are vertically integrated retailers not paying farmers, and not honoring deals they made together. We have no protections, we have no way to fight back. If we were to publicly speak out, we'd get blacklisted from that retailer, when we depend on a certain number of sales per month to survive.

We personally have purposely kept our curated list of retail partners low, we intentionally seek out those looking to help build a sustainable cannabis marketplace and have shown they want small producers like us to thrive in this market. Initially, we only worked with partners that would pay a delivery fee for example, knowing that those who wouldn't early on, would be the first to take advantage of any situation for themselves over a farmer. We love to give credit where it's due, Thank you to Winooski Organics, Garcia's, and Ninny Goat & Co that consistently go above and beyond for sungrown and small cultivators in this state. We wouldn't be here without you, and we know how much you've uplifted our farm, and farms like us. We are so grateful to you.

We have found our home in this state, and would love to continue to build our dreams and future here. Vermont is a special place that cares about its small businesses and nature, and we hope to see those values reflected in bill S.278 by creating a comprehensive sustainable marketplace for us to thrive in, and get out of this daily survival mode loop farms are stuck in.

If left to their own devices, companies will put profits over people and plants, and in order to maintain a balance Vermont is always seeking, we need to protect small farmers, strengthen opportunities such as direct to consumer sales, events, and delivery options. Without these efforts, we will look like the California or Colorado market where cannabis has little to no dollar worth anywhere you look. It has become an over-saturated impossible market to thrive in, and we don't want to bring the same issues here.

Vermont stands out with its craft beer and experiences in nature, these are things that have been protected through laws and regulations in this state, we are asking you to do the same

for cannabis. Set aside the stigma of how this plant has been presented to you over the years, and treat it as the agricultural crop it is, and help the struggling farmers looking to continue their homesteading lives. We're not looking to get rich, we're looking to not get decimated by unfair practices, and companies with far more investment power than we've ever had access to in our lives. We're up for our license renewal right now, and we want to continue. We love what we do, but we don't love what's happening in this market and seeing the lack of opportunity to grow. This bill could help us, and open the pathways to having a direct contact with people who buy our goods and

Make it make sense for cannabis farmers to continue to grow cannabis in this beautiful state. We will continue to put plants and people over profits, and build up our community in our little corner of Barnet. If given the opportunity, we will continue to change the micro-climate on our farm and aggressively input more carbon into the ground. We farm only 1 out of our 7 acres among many other sustainable practices to nurture nature. We will continue to preserve the lands, trees, and streams because it is our duty as we live, to help life thrive all around us.

Please give us the opportunity to thrive by strengthening the direct sales sections 5 and 6. Dispensaries will not go under from people being able to buy directly from farms. Amazon sells things that can be bought directly on a website every minute of the day. Give the CCB greater power to enforce contracts, to protect farmers against lack of payment or otherwise shady practices we know have been going on too long behind closed doors that we cannot call out alone without getting blacklisted.

We have an undying love and passion for cultivating organically, and being stewards of the land. Farming is a lifestyle that goes beyond clocking in at a job, and we don't see ourselves doing anything else, please allow us to continue doing what we love.

Support your Vermont farmers!

Thank you,

Cynthia Pudan Silva,
Co-Founder, Snowbird Botanicals