

To: House Federal & State Affairs Committee
From: Jo Ann Kuhlmann, Eagle Creek Vineyards
RE: Senate Bills 379 and 390

Chairman Brunk and committee:

I support SB 379 and 390.

I grow grapes, which I sell to Kansas Farm wineries – I do not have a winery. With 18 acres planted to grapes I have just over 5% of all grapes planted in Kansas (at the end of 2010). Considering that most wineries also grow grapes, that makes me one of the larger producers of Kansas grapes not grown by a Kansas winery.

As a farmer I face the same challenges as traditional row-crow farmers, including the fact that weather conditions can eliminate my crop in any given year. As a “grape” farmer I face additional challenges including: 1) high initial capital requirements, 2) finite number of potential customers, and 3) no research support from K-State.

As a farmer, I know I will have bad weather years. My fear is that under the current guidelines (and past interpretations from ABC) wineries may not be able to survive my bad weather years. Then when I do have a bumper crop, there may be no winery to sell it to.

In 2006 I attended my first committee hearing on the fruit requirement portion of the Kansas Farm Winery Act. At that time I supported the 60% minimum fruit requirement placed on Kansas Farm wineries; I viewed it as insurance that after spending the money to establish a vineyard I would have a market for my crop. In theory, I thought the Kansas industry would grow.

But our Kansas industry has not grown. I have been watching our industry “not grow” since 2004. At the same time I have watched surrounding state’s wine industries grow exponentially. My conclusion: what we are doing is not working.

I, therefore, now support the reduced minimum fruit requirement shown in SB 379. I also support all changes found in SB 390. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

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House Federal & State Affairs

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