

Wheat State Wine Co., LLC



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Date: March 27, 2012

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Chris Tyler and I am the co-owner of Wheat State Wine Co., located in Winfield, KS. I am asking that you pass SB 379 which reduces the current in-state fruit requirement for farm wineries from 60% to 20%.

The biggest reason for my support of a reduction in the 60/40 rule is that there simply are not enough grapes available in the state to provide farm wineries with the amount needed to sustain a profitable business. To provide the money needed for our vineyard and winery to grow, we need capital, and that means we need to sell wine. We need approximately 25 tons of fruit for our production to be sustainable, yet our own vineyard currently only produces less than 10 tons of fruit. We've looked for other grape growers in Kansas, but all growers seemed to have their fruit contracts filled. There are several other wineries in Kansas that have been unable to find extra fruit as well, Wyldewood Cellars, Grace Hill Winery, and the Wine Barn to name a few. Our winery wants to use as many Kansas grapes as possible, but when that doesn't leave us with enough wine to cover our costs, we need to be able to source more fruit from out of state.

I understand that some of the vineyard owners might be frightened that a reduction in the allowable purchase from out of state will allow for the wineries to source grapes from other states and not buy in state. I counter that argument with my own experience and knowledge as a winemaker. I will not go as far as speaking for the other winemakers in the state, but as one myself, I prefer to source grapes locally. There are many benefits for doing so. The quality is the biggest reason for me. The quality of grapes goes down when the time from the vine to the winery is increased. It is beneficial to source locally. Also, prices are reduced for the winery because shipping costs are lower, so they can afford to pay more for local grapes.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Tyler
Wheat State Wine Co., LLC
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620.262.5742

House Federal & State Affairs

Date: 3-29-12

Attachment # 18