



Testimony on HB 4212

Submitted by Oregon Winegrowers Association Joint Committee on The First Special Session of 2020

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-chair Kotek, and members of the Joint committee,

I am Dan Jarman, representing the Oregon Winegrowers Association.

For more than 40 years, the Oregon Winegrowers Association has been advocating for Oregon wineries and vineyards throughout all regions of the state. Our members are large and small, but the common thread is they work every day to make Oregon's wine industry one of the most prestigious in the world.

The COVID economic downturn has hit our wine industry particularly hard. There are news headlines that alcohol consumption has been on the rise since the start of the pandemic, but that does not mean that most of our Oregon wine industry has seen the benefit.

As you know, most of our industry can be described as small, boutique wineries making premium consumer branded products. Roughly 70% of our wineries make less than 5,000 cases of wine per year, which makes them small businesses. The vast majority of our industry sells to restaurants and direct to consumers through tasting rooms sales.

Those sales have mostly dried up over the past few months, and while businesses are just now opening up, our recovery has been slow. The future is uncertain for many of small wineries and vineyards.

The wine business is multifaceted. We are members of the agriculture community who own vineyards that grow grapes. We are processors with winery operations that make, store and bottle wine. Most operations have retail & hospitality tasting rooms that sell wine under well-known consumer brands.

We are thankful that Governor Kate Brown allowed our vineyards and winery operations to stay open. However, to do so, our industry has needed to follow strict rules and guidelines that are different for all three sectors of our wine business.

The myriad of regulation has been daunting for our small businesses, but we understand the importance. Protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and tasting room guests is paramount to our industry.

We hope the legislature will agree to pass liability protection for our small businesses who are doing their best to follow public health guidance issued by various government agencies. In our case, agencies such as ODA, OHSA, OHA and local public health departments.

We ask your committee to adopt reasonable liability protection, so our winery and vineyard operations aren't the targets of potential frivolous and costly litigation, especially during this time of great financial uncertainty for our Oregon wine industry. Thank you.

June 25, 2020