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BlueJacket Crossing Vineyard & Winery
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Via E-Mail Only (connie.burns@senate.ks.gov)

Senator Pete Brungardt, Chair
Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bills SB379 and SB390

Dear Chairman Brungardt, Members of the Committee, and Staff:

This testimony is in response to the content of SB379 and SB390. From our first day of operation, our business model was defined by the desire to grow grapes and produce a high quality wine in Kansas. This path is slow and methodical. Six years after starting the vineyard we had enough fruit to start our winery. The most significant factor in taking that long to begin winery operations was the lack of grapes grown in Kansas. With the 60/40 rule in place, growers have had high demand for their fruit. In our 11 years of experience we have seen the cost of fruit double and the number of number of wineries in Kansas more than double. More importantly, during that time we have seen the quality of Kansas wine recognized National and Internationally. A number of Kansas wineries have won significant awards in both National and International competitions. The California wine industry is now recognizing the merits of rootstock grown in our region and the unique characteristics that our wines produce. Why would we want to sacrifice this success by eliminating the part of these bills that requires a minimum of 60% Kansas fruit? Why would we want to jeopardize not only the growing recognition of the Kansas wine industry, but also, and more importantly, the livelihood of our vineyards and grape growers by allowing unlimited amounts of grapes, juice, and wine be to 'bottled in Kansas' but not produced in Kansas. Typically these products are 'left over inventory' and the quality and character suspect. We care about the reputation of our wine industry and do not want it compromised.

It is true that procuring fruit and/or juice from sources outside of Kansas is sometimes necessary. Our experience with having a vineyard has shown us that problems inevitably will arise that can threaten the grape crop and our wine production. We have incurred losses due to drift damage, frost and excessive heat. As an emergency measure in these cases, the Kansas Department of Agriculture recognizes these setbacks and makes allowances for us to have temporary relief from these losses to allow our wine production to continue despite the impact on our crops. In this case, we can temporarily procure fruit from outside of Kansas until our vineyards heal. However, as noted, this is meant as a temporary measure.

In conclusion, it is our desire as a Kansas farm winery to maintain the integrity of our product. Thus, we are adamantly opposed to the removal of the minimum requirement of 60% Kansas grapes in Kansas wine as stated in these two bills.

Respectfully submitted,
Pep Selvan
BlueJacket Crossing Vineyard & Winery

Sn Fed & State
Attachment 25
2-22-12