Dear Madam Chair Lyons, Vice Chair Gulick, and Committee –

I am writing to express my appreciation for the insightful questions and discussions within the committee regarding Bill S.278, An Act Relating to Cannabis this week. As the state's oldest and largest member-based nonprofit organization representing the regulated cannabis industry, Vermont Growers Association is committed to working collaboratively to foster understanding and ensure the integrity of our nascent industry, and ask that you consider supporting the legislation as it has been presented to your committee. Additionally, if time permits, and as the committee of jurisdiction for medical cannabis, I urge you to address reasonable reforms to the Medical Cannabis Program, which have not yet been discussed in this General Assembly.

Vermont is nearly 4 years into a regulated cannabis market, with around 568 active licensed small farms and businesses participating, creating over 1,500 new jobs and bringing in hundreds of millions in state revenue since it came online in 2022. The genie is not going back into the bottle, and the state should be proud that Vermont has created one of the safest and most compliant cannabis markets in the country, with fewer product recalls and public health violations than other states.

As anticipated with any newly established market, it is crucial to maintain ongoing efforts that promote its viability and growth. Central to this effort is ensuring that the regulated market outperforms the illicit market and captures its market share, while prioritizing public health and safety in all decision-making. This is exactly what Bill S.278 represents: a thoughtfully developed market expansion bill with incremental, well-intentioned, and well-regulated proposals to capture more of the illicit market share and increase tax revenue for the state, while seeking to improve public health or safety.

I am happy to address each section of Bill S.278 before the committee – from reasonable increases in transaction and possession limits that match those of the Medical Cannabis Program, through still lesser limits than our neighboring states, to increases in total package limits, to pilot programs for events and delivery – however, and in efforts to be brief, I will leave you with a condersation, that market expansion is not in conflict with public health and safety, but they are one in the same. The more the state can do to capture customers and businesses from the illicit market, the greater the reduction in risks associated with it and the greater the increase in tax revenue.

Lastly, I wish to emphasize that Bill S.278 is the result of years of hard work from our organization, the Cannabis Control Board, and local stakeholders. SEDHGA spent several weeks this session gathering input from various stakeholders, and any decisions to remove or alter sections of the bill, we ask that it include a similar inclusive process that considers feedback from local stakeholders whose interests and efforts are reflected in this bill. What is missing from this bill are improvements to the Medical Cannabis Program, which we would urge this committee to take up, should it have the time.

Thank you for your time. Local cannabis farms and businesses are proud of the market the General Assembly and the Cannabis Control Board have supported and appreciate the

opportunity to demonstrate their respect for the market and public safety through fair proposals. I am happy to make myself available to you and the committee.

All my best,

Geoffrey Pizzutillo,
CoFounder, Executive Director
~
Vermont Growers Association