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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE NYS ASSEMBLY AND NYS SENATE
FROM FRONTENAC WINERY URGING THE
INCLUSION OF WINE IN GROCERY STORES IN THE FY27 BUDGET**

January 27, 2026

Chairs Krueger and Pretlow, Hinchey and Lupardo, Serrano and Kim, and distinguished committee members of the Senate and Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony urging the inclusion of wine in grocery stores in this year's budget.

My name is Lawrence Doolittle and I am co-owner of Frontenac Point Estate Winery located in Trumansburg, New York but you may be more familiar with my mother, Carol Doolittle.

Other major wine-producing states allow the sale of wine in grocery stores, but not New York. New York State ranks second in terms of wine production per capita, but 14th in the number of wine-selling outlets per capita. While *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* ranked the Finger Lakes as the premiere wine region in the country this fall, New York wines are “bottled up” because there are relatively few retail outlets available.

Allowing the sale of wine in grocery stores would greatly expand the number of retail outlets offering New York wines, at a time when the New York wine sector is suffering from retaliatory tariffs and other trade barriers with Canada. Monthly U.S. wine exports decreased from \$34 million in May of 2024 to just over \$961,000 in May of 2025. Only 13% of New York wines are sold in New York restaurants and liquor stores.

While I cannot quantify the impact of wine in grocery stores on Frontenac Point Estate Winery, as we would not immediately be able to take full advantage of distributing in volume to more stores, the policy would provide great potential for growth. Speaking abstractly, with wine in grocery stores, more people would see wine culturally normalized on shelves like beer; they would become interested in New York wines; and they would visit the various wine regions nearby, which would increase traffic to our tasting room—not to mention the benefits that increased wine tourism would have on the agriculture and hospitality sectors of New York's wine regions in central New York, the Hudson Valley and Long Island.

It is also possible that more shelf space for wines would create an opportunity for small and mid-sized wineries who do not distribute currently to expand. This would be even more likely

if a portion of the licensing fees for grocery stores to sell wine was earmarked for the promotion of New York wines, as contemplated in the current legislation.

In conversations with some of my colleagues at larger New York wineries, they have shared with me that they would, in fact, expect increased wine sales – even in the first year – if they could get their products on supermarket shelves across the state. But unfortunately many of them are hesitant to come out and state this publicly, as they are understandably concerned about potential retribution from the big liquor lobby.

Wine in grocery stores represents an issue supported by three-quarters of consumers that would provide a lifeline for New York's wineries that are facing economic headwinds at the same time that New York wines are being nationally lauded. I urge the Legislature to include this popular and economically beneficial policy in this year's budget.

Thank you.