

Larry Dansinger
Bangor
LD 525

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To members of the Labor and Housing Committee of the Maine Legislature:

I am writing to encourage the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on both LD 398 and LD 525. These address the wages of farm workers and the ability for agricultural workers to organize a labor union and bargain collectively with their employers.

These bills are not asking for special treatment at all. They are simply asking that individuals employed in agriculture be treated the same as other workers in construction, retail, government, industrial, etc. and whether their collars are blue, pink, or some other color.

I'm sure others will also point out this historical and current "special treatment" of agricultural workers. That agriculture and domestic employment were dominated by Blacks and other people of color, and that state and federal lawmakers in the 1930's intentionally chose to leave them out of coverage for both overtime work and the ability to organize a labor union, was an act of racism. A continuation, now and tomorrow, of that denial of basic rights is a continuation of that original act. Let us not allow a policy that began as racism to continue any longer, whether we think it is still racism or not.

While some of those who work in agricultural jobs may work temporarily or part-time, others work full-time, five days a week or even every day. Cows and chickens do not take off weekends and holidays from giving milk or laying eggs. Agricultural work is different but not unique. It does not deserve to be singled out for the restrictions that have been placed on it in the past.

Let us end this denial of basic rights to certain individuals just because of the kind of work they do and hold all workers and employers to the same standard in their rights and responsibilities.

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