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Committee on Labor and Housing
LD 525 HP 330

An Act to Protect Farm Workers by Allowing Them to Organize for the Purposes of Collective Bargaining

Committee Members:

I am against this bill. I do not understand why it's needed.

As an agritourism farm we generally hire high school students for summer work. They require constant supervision. They are paid the minimum wage which means we have to pay our long time employees more than minimum wage.

Our routine work hours are 8-4 Monday through Friday with 30 minutes for lunch (unpaid) and two 15 minute (paid) breaks, one at 10:00 am and the other at 2:00 pm. One employee, who is coasting to retirement, takes every Friday off. Another works until 2:00 pm and later if we need him. A working mother comes in a 9:00 am and leaves at 2:00 pm and some days at noon. She sometimes has to leave early due to a sickness or a bus cancellation.

We are very flexible, if they need time off we usually okay it. When we need them for planting or harvest they are here. On hot/humid days they can leave at noon if they want to.

If the business makes money at the end of the season we pay every employee (agricultural and retail) a bonus. We take a percentage of the net profit and we figure in how many hours they worked since opening day. The more hours worked the more dollars in their bonus. One employee referred to this as profit sharing.

If agricultural employees were to strike wouldn't they do it during planting or harvest time. I do not recall seeing anything in the bill about striking. This would delay planting and the harvest. During harvest the crop may be ruined. A no strike clause?

Almost every farm operation is different. It's not like a Starbucks or Chipotle employee that does pretty much the same jobs.

As you can see we value our longtime employees. We've been lucky getting retail employees but not as many as we would like. I have heard from other businesses in town that our current and past employees love(d) working here.

Are there bad farm owners in Maine that do not care about their employees?

Thank you for reading this.

Respectfully submitted
Jack McAdam