

NICOLAS LINDHOLM
PENOBSCOT
LD 525

I am an organic wild blueberry farmer, certified by MOFGA since 1996, with a seasonal full-time crew of 12-16 people that harvest and process 25,000-35,000 lbs. of fresh-pack and frozen berries. My wife and I own and lease seven wild blueberry fields across five towns in the Blue Hill area, and sell much of our crop direct-to-consumer from our farm, with the balance being sold to Merrill's freezer in Hancock. We are also now constructing a new wild blueberry processing/freezing facility in North Penobscot, where we will be expanding our business to process and market berries from other organic growers across the state, adding more year-round employment opportunities in our community. We support LD 525, as we would like to see farmworkers have the same rights to organize as other non-ag workers do, and make steps towards the end of exploitive labor practices that cheapen food and devalue farm work. We see this bill as one way the state of Maine can encourage a welcoming atmosphere for its labor pool needs, and create a framework that holds farm work as highly skilled and highly valued labor. We support efforts to create a level playing field where agricultural employment is held and seen in the same legal, social, cultural and economic standards as all other employment opportunities in our state. Thank you.