

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor.

My name is Robbie Irving and as a representative of the farming community in Aroostook County, I am writing in opposition to the labor bills being discussed on April 2nd, 2025.

Our family farm takes great pride in compensating our employees for their hard work. We pay well above the minimum wage for the State of Maine. Allowing employees to use the communication changes in LD 357 and LD588 with private right of action and concerted activity would prove to be very detrimental to our business.

LD589 is an ongoing battle for Aroostook County farms as well as the State of Maine. Although southern Maine agriculture differs from where we farm, the County would take an astronomical hit financially if this bill were to be passed. We have proven several times that operating a potato farm is not for the weak. We are not in this business to become rich; we are here to provide a commodity we have been fortunate enough to produce for generations.

There is no denying the cost of living has increased. This has snowballed the cost of efficiently operating a business. When costs increase, the wages being paid to employees do too. Our business has hired migrant workers for the last three years to efficiently plant crops, harvest crops, and operate two packing facilities for distribution due to local labor shortages. The federal government already mandates their wages. (At a much higher wage than minimum wage in Maine, might I add.) Overtime wages would all but send multiple farmers into bankruptcy.

When the weather is good, farming starts before the sun comes up and ends well after the sun sets. We have workers that average around 70 hours per week during harvest time. Spending additional thousands of dollars on paying overtime to employees puts a huge dent into our profit, if there even is one.

The State of Maine prides itself in being agriculturally proud. Please support that agricultural heritage. Farmers are not in this business to get rich. We are in this business to honor traditions of generational work ethic with the product of that being quite literally the “fruits of our labor.”

Without your help, family farms, growers, processors, and the agriculture community that we love will undoubtedly take a turn for the worse.

Thank you for your consideration,

Robert M. Irving
Irving Farms
Caribou, ME