

April 23, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and Members of the Committee on Labor,

We, the undersigned dairy farmers of Maine, respectfully submit this letter in opposition to any legislative or regulatory effort to classify agricultural workers as employees under Maine's wage and hour statutes.

Maine's family farms operate within tight margins and are deeply intertwined with the natural rhythms of our land and livestock. The nature of dairy farming is unlike other industries. It requires flexibility, long hours, and responsiveness to unpredictable weather, animal health, and market conditions. The traditional and mutually beneficial relationship between farmers and agricultural workers is built on shared understanding, seasonal necessity, and trust.

Classifying agricultural workers as employees under the same framework designed for conventional businesses would impose rigid wage and hour rules that do not reflect the reality of farm work. These changes could:

- **Undermine small family farms** by increasing labor costs to unsustainable levels, potentially forcing many out of business.
- **Reduce job opportunities** for the very workers this proposal aims to help, as farms cut back on hiring or mechanize operations to survive.
- **Disrupt a proven model** of seasonal and housing-included employment arrangements that are common in agriculture and often more holistic than standard employment structures.

We are not opposed to fair labor practices. In fact, most of us already exceed basic standards in terms of pay, housing, and treatment. But agricultural labor is fundamentally different from other industries. A one-size-fits-all legal classification ignores these unique realities.

We urge lawmakers and regulators to preserve the current exemptions in Maine's wage and hour laws for agricultural workers. Instead of imposing rigid new classifications, we advocate for dialogue—so that reforms, if needed, are crafted in consultation with the people who know farm work best: farmers and their crews.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We are proud stewards of Maine's rural economy and heritage, and we look forward to working together on policies that support our farms and those who work alongside us.

Sincerely,

Hardy Farm, Farmington

Alfaslopes Farm, Charleston

Cooley Farm, Ripley

Stonyvale, Inc, Exeter

Caverly Farms LLC, Clinton

Highland Farms, Cornish

Misty Meadows Farm, Clinton

Michaud Farm, China

Thomas Farm, Garland

Cummings Farm, Staceyville

FourthGen Farms, St. Albans

Bonnie-Lea Farm, Hermon

Green Valle Farm, Newburgh

Wide Ruin Farm, Newport

Simpson Farm, Corinna