



**Maine Unitarian Universalist
State Advocacy Network**
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Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

My name is Reba Richardson, and I am a resident of Warren. I am testifying in support of LD 398 and LD 525 on behalf of the Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network (MUUSAN). The MUUSAN network links Maine's 26 UU congregations in working for legislation that recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every person and promotes justice, equity, and compassion for all with whom we share this great state.

As strange as it sounds, over seventeen years ago, I became a churchgoer because of my family's vegetable farm. The Rockland UU congregation invited our family farm to make vegetable deliveries to the church's parking lot on Sunday mornings. This faith community's support helped our farm expand to the scale where we were providing weekly vegetable shares to over 250 families for more than six months of every year. Over this same period of time, our young family became deeply involved in the UU faith, absorbing the UU principles that include the inherent right and dignity of every person as well as the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process. These two bills speak directly to both of these UU principles.

I have spent nearly my entire adult life as a farmer, and I believe that here in Maine, we tend to see ourselves as an exception to the systems that have shaped agriculture throughout the rest of the United States. Our Maine communities support local agriculture in remarkable and significant ways, and we all know of farmers who have excellent relationships with their employees. But these bills are not about any individual farm; they are about a legal system that does not currently see any farm workers in our state as worthy of the same rights and privileges as nearly all other Maine workers. With these two bills, we can prove how deeply Maine values its farm workers. In turn, I believe this will help attract the skilled and dedicated farm labor Maine farms require in order to survive. We know from the experience of other states that have passed similar legislation that farms can and will thrive despite - and in fact because of - these laws.

With these two bills, I believe we have the opportunity for Maine's agricultural community to become truly exceptional. As a representative of MUUSAN and a member of the Maine farm community, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 398 and LD 525.

Thank you,

Reba Richardson