

## **Farmworker Bill Testimony 4/18/23**

**Cynthia Simpson**

*Community Advocate, Mano en Mano*

*Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and members of the Labor & Housing Committee, my name is Cynthia Simpson and I work as a Community Advocate at Mano en Mano- an organization that works alongside immigrant and migrant farmworker communities so that they can thrive in Maine. I am here to testify in support of LD 525, LD 398 and LD 1483.*

*We believe that our personal stories and lived experiences are the most powerful tools we have to change the world. In order to illustrate the significance of these bills, I would like to share stories from farm workers across the state of Maine.*

*The following is a story from a blueberry raker during the 2022 harvest:*

*“This year (2022), the berries are very small, and one has to do double the work to harvest the same amount as previous years. I come to Maine every year...I begin my year in Florida and I work in agriculture traveling up east. This year has been the most difficult year in Maine because of the drought. The price paid for a basket hasn’t changed in years and with what I have to pay in gas and transportation, I will almost just cut even this year.”*

*Next, I would like to share the words of Sonia, a community member who works in the fishing industry in Downeast Maine. She is a mother who dreams of a better life for her children. She shares:*

*“My name is Sonia, and my family immigrated in 2019 from Guatemala. We came because there was a lot of insecurities in my homeland. I like spending time with my family and children, and I currently work in the fishing industry. My dream for the future is to find a job where I would have a steady income. Not receiving overtime pay negatively affects us. It makes it hard for us to make rent. I think if we were able to have these rights things would be better and we could create a better life for me and my family.”*

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*Lastly, Francico has worked in the dairy industry since arriving to central Maine from Guatemala. He sees these bills as an opportunity to have more rights and earn a dignified income to create a better life.*

*“We came to the states from Guatemala for a better life a few years ago. I came first then my wife, I work on a dairy farm now in Maine. We have had our struggles but thankfully we have made it through.*

*An increase in pay through receiving overtime would change my life dramatically. There would be more help for me and my family to continue living here in Maine. It would mean a better life for all, and we would have more rights .”*

*These stories and experiences come from real people, with real dreams and hopes for the future. Passing LD 525, LD 398 and LD 1483 means that we will work towards creating justice and will support farmworkers in our state to have the equal rights they deserve so we all can thrive.*