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THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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**LD 952, "An Act to Exempt Agricultural Employers and Employees from the  
Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program"  
Joint Standing Committee on Labor  
April 23, 2025**

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

My name is Russell Black and I represent Senate District 5. I am here today to introduce LD 952, "An Act to Exempt Agricultural Employers and Employees from the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program."

As a farmer, I know firsthand the unique challenges we face in agriculture. Our industry is vital to Maine's economy, but it operates very differently from other sectors. Many agricultural employers run small, family-owned businesses with tight margins and seasonal work. These challenges make it difficult to navigate policies that are designed with other industries in mind.

In January 2025, the paid family and medical leave program began requiring contributions from employers, including those of us in agriculture. While this program is valuable for many workers, it wasn't designed with agriculture in mind, and as a result, it has created an unintended financial burden on farmers and agricultural employers across the state.

This bill aims to correct that issue. First, it removes agricultural workers from the paid family and medical leave benefits program, recognizing that our workforce is treated differently under federal law. Second, it ensures that agricultural employers get refunds for the contributions they've made to the program and that any premiums deducted from workers' wages are returned to them.

The need for this bill is immediate, that's why we have an emergency preamble attached to it. As farmers, we often work with tight budgets, and any additional financial burden could put a strain on our businesses. If we don't act quickly, these unnecessary costs could harm our ability to continue operating and supporting our workers.

The retroactive provisions in the bill, going back to October 2023, will make sure no agricultural employer is unfairly burdened by a program that was never meant for them. By passing this bill, we can provide relief to farmers and ensure that our industry can continue to thrive without facing unnecessary financial stress.

I urge the Committee to support this bill, as it will help protect Maine's agricultural sector and the hardworking people who make it run.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.