

Farmworker Bill Testimony 4/2/25

Juana Rodriguez Vazquez
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Farmworker Bill Testimony 2025

My name is Juana Rodriguez Vazquez, and I am the Executive Director at Mano en Mano—an organization that works alongside immigrant and migrant farmworker communities to ensure they have the resources and support they need to thrive in Maine. I am here to testify in strong support of LD 588 and LD 589.

Farmworkers are the backbone of Maine’s agricultural and seafood industries, yet they continue to face significant hardships due to outdated labor laws that exclude them from the basic rights afforded to other workers.

Now in 2025, farmworkers are particularly vulnerable due to worsening economic, environmental and structural conditions. Inflation has driven up the costs of essentials such as housing, food, and transportation, making it even harder for farmworkers to make ends meet. Climate change has led to unpredictable weather patterns, increasing the risk of droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures, all of which threaten farmworkers’ livelihoods and health. Additionally, ongoing labor shortages and systemic barriers have resulted in heavier workloads, often without corresponding wage increases or worker protections. Without the right to collectively bargain and receive fair compensation, farmworkers remain trapped in a cycle of economic insecurity and exploitation.

Personal Testimonies from Maine Farmworkers

To illustrate the urgent need for these bills, I want to share the stories of several farmworkers who contribute to Maine’s economy but struggle under the current system.

A Blueberry Raker’s Story:

“This past season, the berries were small, and I had to work twice as hard to harvest the same amount as in previous years. I have been coming to Maine for years, traveling up the East Coast for work, but this has been one of the hardest years yet. The price per basket has remained the same for years, and with rising costs for gas and transportation, I barely break even. A fair wage and the right to negotiate for better pay would make a world of difference for me and my family.”

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Sonia, a Worker in the Fishing Industry:

“My name is Sonia, and my family immigrated to Maine in search of a better life. I work in the fishing industry, and while I take pride in my work, the lack of overtime pay makes it difficult to support my children. We struggle to make rent and afford necessities. If farmworkers like me had these protections, it would mean stability for our families and a chance to build a better future.”

Francisco, a Dairy Farmworker:

“I came to the U.S. from Guatemala for a better life. I now work on a dairy farm in Maine. My wife and I have worked hard, but it has not been easy. If I were paid overtime, it would change my life dramatically. It would mean being able to provide for my family, save for the future, and live with dignity. These bills would give farmworkers like me the rights we deserve.”

Farmworkers are essential to Maine’s economy and communities. Yet, they continue to be excluded from labor protections due to historical marginalization and systemic inequities. It is time for change.

I come from a migrant family. My mother, father, sisters and brother have worked in farm work since before I was born, and I spent a large part of my childhood traveling across the United States following the harvest, and putting food on the tables of families across the country.

Throughout my life I have witnessed and experienced the many challenges that farmworkers face. By passing LD 588 and LD 589, we take a significant step toward justice for farmworkers, recognizing their humanity, dignity, and invaluable contributions to our state. These bills will provide farmworkers and families like mine, with the ability to advocate for themselves and ensure they receive fair wages and working conditions.

I urge you to stand with farmworkers and pass these critical pieces of legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration