

W.R Allen INC

267 Front Ridge Road

Orland, Maine 04472

Simeon Allen General Manager for W.R Allen

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 1022

An Act To Make Agricultural Workers and Other Workers Employees under the Wage and Hour Laws

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Simeon Allen and I am one of the owner, operators of W.R Allen Inc. Located in Orland, Maine. As a small family owned business we manage about 600 acres per year doing everything from the pruning of the blueberry plant to operating an IQF processing facility where we clean, freeze, sort, and package the iconic wild Maine blueberry into a 30 lb carton.

This bill if passed would be very harmful to all Maine blueberry growers and processors in this state. The harvest of the wild Maine blueberry happens in a very short period of time and during that time we hire migrate workers to help with the harvest and the process of freezing our blueberries. This is an 8-10 hour day, 7 days a week job that lasts about 4 weeks. If this bill were to pass we would have no choice but to limit our workforce to 40 hours/week, not only costing the workers the income they come here to make but also potentially forcing the growers to lose portions of their crop due to loss of labor from unaffordable wages.

Over the last decade plus we have hired the same crew of migrant workers that travel up the east coast harvesting other crops along the way. These men and women preform jobs from hand harvesting in our rockier fields, to working the back of a tractor harvester, to working on the production line at the processing facility. As owner operators we enjoy seeing the same faces every year and I know that our workers feel the same.

If this bill passes this would put a financial burden on our company that would force us to limit our work force to a 40 hours/week which would limit the earnings of our agriculture workers because the farmer can't afford overtime pay. This would significantly hurt not only the farmers but the agriculture workers that are here to work as many hours as possible and make as much money for their families as they can in this short season.

Many of these men and women talk about how this is one of the most lucrative crops that they harvest. Good hand harvesters have told me that they can make more money in this single harvest of 4 weeks than their entire household in their native country can make in a whole year. They take pride in being hard workers for our company and for their families and with their hard work there is a financial reward.

I am in strong opposition of this bill and if this was to pass will put such a burden on growers and processors, small and large they will be forced out of a business that them and their families have been doing for decades. This bill will hurt farmers and processors and will significantly limit the income that our migrant workforce has always worked hard for.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simeon Allen', written in a cursive style.

Simeon Allen

General Manager

W.R Allen Inc