

Senator Miramant, Representative Harnett, and members of the Committee of Labor and Housing:

I am Rick Belanger, president of R. Belanger and Sons Farms from Lewiston. We grow approximately 200 acres of fresh market vegetables. We employ 8 people full time and 14 more people seasonally. This bill, LD-1022, would remove the exemption of overtime pay for our agricultural employees. I feel like this exemption is needed due to the type of work we do. Our planting and harvesting schedule is very dependent on weather. Our average work week is 60 – 70 hours per week and our pay scale is \$14.99 and more. Overtime pay would put our cost per hour at a level that would not be sustainable. We have a hard time to recruit qualified workers and that is one of the reasons we work so many hours.

Our employees work those hours with a smile! I am serious! They want as many hours as they can because they know its seasonal. I am afraid that if I am forced to pay over time, I will have to grow crops that are highly mechanized for harvesting and planting. That would mean I would probably hire only 12 people instead of 22. If we want our food produced locally here in Maine, we must not add roadblocks to an already tough industry.

Respectfully,

Rick Belanger