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I am submitting testimony regarding LD1022, specifically overtime wages for farm workers. We own an organic wild blueberry farm based in Waldo County. We employ 12 people during our short harvest season in August. Half of those workers are employed on the harvest crew and 1/2 are in the packing shed. The packing shed is staffed by a local family with 4 kids and they are paid per-pint whereas the harvest crew are paid by the hour. We used to employ over 30 however the lack of available labor and subsequent rise in wages forced us to move to mechanical harvesting a few years ago. As a result we reduced our labor force by over 50% (from 30 to 12). The market does a far better job at setting labor prices than the government. We pay most of our field laborers \$15 an hour and 1 or 2 high school aged kids a dollar over min wage. If someone makes a given wage for working in a fast food restaurant, we have to pay better than that as the work is harder. Our field workers are a mix retired people and college kids that kid the amount of hours they can get in 30 days and the atmosphere of working on a farm. The crew mostly works 6 days a week for 4 weeks. By instituting overtime rules I am going to be forced to cut their hours in order to stay under the 40 hour a week rules which will be wildly unpopular with my crew. Basically hire twice the people (if available) or just stop farming enough land to be able to harvest everything with the available labor working only 40 hours per week. The older folks use this to pay their insurance premiums for the year and cutting their hours would be a hardship upon them. The wild blueberry price is volatile and also is NOT KNOWN UNTIL WELL AFTER THE HARVEST. Meaning: we do not know what our income will be until after we have already spent the money for that year. We do produce fresh berries, the price of which are known ahead of time, but we can only pack a very small percentage of our total yield into fresh, the rest goes to the processor at less than 25% of the price (or less) on average. Blueberry prices are not guaranteed and do not automatically go up when expenses go up. Unless the legislature is proposing pricing guarantees to match state mandated increases in labor costs then I would urge our representatives to leave this alone and not to pass this bill in its current form. Seasonal farm labor is just that, it is a seasonal temporary job and not a career. There is a shortage of farm labor in Maine and that supply/demand relationship sets wages. We have used migrant labor in the past when we have had trouble finding local labor. They are paid as good or better as local labor but honestly work twice as hard as some of the locally available labor. My crew loves working along side them and I only wish it were easier to get them here. This bill looks like a solution that is looking for a problem, that does not universally exist across the spectrum that this bill covers.

-Josh Dickson Foggy Hill Farm LLC