

Suzan Elichaa  
south portland  
LD 1022

I am asking Maine to join the other states that are no longer allowing the abuse of hard working, underpaid, farmworkers. I recently learned these people are excluded from the minimum wage and overtime protection that the rest of us have. They have no right to unionize. I am a middle class, middle aged, white woman that sincerely regrets my previous views. Farm workers deserve fair wages. If it raises food prices I am fine with it (expand food stamps if necessary). I am disgusted with myself for my past views that said poorly paid workers should just quit and find better jobs. I thought the work they did was not worth more, they needed to upgrade their skills to make more money. I now understand how WRONG I was. Demanding anyone to work for less than a fair, living, wage to keep prices low for other (or to make sure a business can "survive") is UTTER INSANITY.. We have no right to expect another person to subsidize our grocery prices (or cheap fast food). The most shameful part is the workers subsidizing costs are those that can least afford it.

I am sure there are many small Maine farms saying raising wages will put them under. For most of my life I have owned small businesses and I completely understand their fear. Ideally these changes would be made on a federal level but clearly congress is ineffective. All states need to step up to the plate and give farmworkers the protections we all have. Then there will be no sourcing from states with cheaper underpaid labor.

If farms provide housing & meals, these should be FAIRLY included in compensation calculations. No games allowed in overvaluing these. For the rest of the world bonuses are just that. They do not impact minimum wage or overtime and farmworkers should be treated the same.

If farmers claim the workers are making more than they do it is irrelevant. Expecting workers to subsidize their farm so it can survive is disgusting abuse.