

SUBMITTED April 7, 2021 BY: Penelope A Jordan (21 Wells Rd, Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107)

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Penelope Jordan and I am here to speak against LD 1022.

I am one of the owners of Jordan's Farm a 5th generation farm in Cape Elizabeth. My siblings and I operate a mixed vegetable operation tilling 40 – 50 acres a season, selling into retail and wholesale markets.

We employ approximately 18 people in various roles each season, 40% could be classified as farm workers. Our skilled labor, which is our field workers, is from Puerto Rico. We supply housing, travel, vehicle; we pay \$4.00 – \$6.00 above minimum wage, provide PTO, paid holidays and they receive a bonus each season.

They come each season expecting to earn enough to provide for their families; they have bought homes and put children through college. They come for about 5 months and expect 55-60 hrs a week – it is not sustainable for our business to pay overtime for 15-20 hrs and continue to pay \$4.00 - \$6.00 above minimum wage. This would then impact our employees' income, by over \$6,000 - \$7,000.

If we fully implemented overtime - payroll would increase by as much as \$22,000 (not including what it adds to workers comp and payroll taxes). This will then be passed on to our customers – because we can't absorb any more.

Now, if you could assure me that consumers would be willing (and able) to pay more money for my products I might be standing here with a different message. But the fact is over 13% of Maine households and 1 in 5 Maine children are food insecure and over 35% employees do not earn a living wage, and we are seeing unprecedented hunger in our state. This does not bode well for market expansion. This bill will put Maine grown/raised food out of reach for many more Mainers and make Maine farms less competitive with other states.

My message here today is that farms can NOT absorb the impacts of this bill. Not without the ability of people to pay a greater price for products.

So, address poverty in our state, move people to an income that allows them housing, food and an education for their children. Then let's talk – farms need market in order to succeed and we need to be able to sell our products at a price that works for our business and that the majority of Mainers' can afford; this bill would put a head of lettuce at \$3.00 this isn't affordable for most people in Maine – when you consider Maine's median income is lower than the national average (and as an aside significantly below several of the states who have implemented overtime).

This bill not only impacts our workers and our farm, but all Maine people. And is counter to one of Governor Mills (and Chairman Hickman's) key strategies – Ending Hunger in Maine by 2030. It is counter to farm retention, Maine feeding itself and decreasing food waste/loss on farms. This bill will drive consolidation and will cause some farms to “pack it in”.

This bill is before it's time – address some of the other challenges before moving this forward.

My passion is growing food. My dream is ending hunger and this cannot be accomplished if we cannot supply the quantity of food to feed Maine at a price that is affordable.

Let's take this one step at a time.