

**Testimony Against LD 1022 and “An Act To Make Agricultural Workers and
Other Workers Employees under the Wage and Hour Laws”**

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the committee, my name is Eric Seaman and I am testifying against LD 1022 and “An Act To Make Agricultural Workers and Other Workers Employees under the Wage and Hour Laws”

My wife and I run a 60 acre fruit and vegetable farm in Litchfield. We sell our crops at a roadside stand as well as wholesale to other stands, farms and stores. The inability to find suitable local labor has forced us to hire H2A workers to care and harvest the crops. Our pay rate is set yearly by the U.S. government. For 2021 the rate is \$14.99 an hour an increase of \$.70 an hour from last year. We have not received any substantial price increases from our largest customers in the last 5 years to keep up with the increase cost of growing the crops. They account for about 70% of our business.

The nature of crop farming is working hard during the growing season to make a living, knowing the rewards are more time to ourselves and family in the off season. Our workers also come knowing these conditions. These are good jobs which allow them to support their families and have more time with them in the off season

If LD 1022 passes I estimate an \$17,194.00 of expense in overtime and related labor cost for our farm at this year’s labor rate. We don’t have the ability to recoup much of this cost so it will come out of our income. How many of you would want to lose that much from your income? With the passage of this bill I will give up wholesale and cut the farm by over 35 acres of crop because it will no longer be profitable for us. Two to three workers will lose their jobs and over 200 tons more produce will have to be imported into the State of Maine to replace what I will stop growing.

The one thing the Covid Pandemic has shown me is how fragile the supply chain is. The State should be helping Agriculture grow more local food not crippling it with bills like LD 1022

Thank You

Eric and Katherine Seaman