

John Weston
Fryeburg

LD 1022: An Act To Make Agricultural Workers and Other Workers Employees
under the Wage and Hour Laws

April 6, 2021

Senator Hickman, Representative Sylvester, and members of the committee,
My name is John Weston and I am testifying against LD 1022.

Agriculture is defined by hard work and long work days.

Maine's growing season is short and long work days are particularly necessary for farmers to produce food in this climate.

Agricultural employees understand that long hours are part of the job. Traditionally the government has also understood this, and not required farmers to pay overtime. Overtime pay would double payroll costs. Profit margins are too small to absorb such an increase and consumers will not pay double for their food. Farmers would be forced to limit workers to 40 hours/week. In order to get the work done with limited hours more employees would need to be hired, but agricultural workers are difficult, often impossible, to find.

It is no secret that most of Maine's crops are harvested by migrant workers. "Locals" will not do labor intensive agricultural work. Migrant workers will tell you that that they leave their families to focus on work and want as many hours as they can be given. They do not want unpaid free time. They appreciate the long days as it helps them maximize their efforts. If they were forced to only work 40 hours/week they will not travel and will not work in agriculture.

Please do not change overtime standards for agricultural employees.

Sincerely,
John Weston
Weston's Farm LLC
Fryeburg, Maine