

State Office Campus Building 12
Albany, NY 12240

Re: Veto the Farm Laborers Wage Board Overtime Decision

Dear Commissioner Reardon,

We urge your office to veto the Farm Laborers Wage Board decision to change the overtime threshold for farm employees from 60 hours to 40 hours. The terrible impact to our farm communities and greater economy in our region of Washington, Saratoga and Warren Counties will be immense. Many of our Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce members are farms and/or are directly related to our Agriculture economy.

While a farm is certainly a business, it is a unique way of life. People who choose to work on farms do so out of passion and knowing that weather, crop planting and harvesting lead to vastly different hours of work than a “9 – 5” job. A farm is often a wonderful blend of “local” workers and foreign “H-2A” workers. All know and understand the long hours and the pay that goes along with those hours. Making it mandatory to go to 40 hours per week and then overtime will not only hurt the farm operation, but it will also hurt the workers as well. Most farms, especially small operations, will have to cut back hours and make sure workers don’t go over 40 hours.

In 1999, we had over 15,000 farms in New York. We are now down to around 5,000 farms in New York. Right now, this decline continues because food prices to farmers are still at historic lows and historic high input costs (labor, fuel, regulations, etc.) are biting into operations costs at an alarming rate. Both Cornell and Farm Credit East have completed studies with grave concerns of the economic impact of this new overtime rule.

We need to keep our farms healthy to provide local food to all New Yorkers. Please join us in supporting farms and maintaining a way of life crucial to all New Yorkers.

Blessings,

Michael Bittel
President/CEO

CC: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of New York
Senator Daphne Jordan, NY-43
Senator Dan Stec, NY-45
Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner, NY-113
Assemblyman Jake Ashby, NY-107
Assemblyman Matt Simpson, NY-114
Warren County Board of Supervisors Chairman Kevin Geraghty
Washington County Board of Supervisors Chairman Samuel J. Hall
Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Chairman Todd Kusnierz
