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STATE OF MAINE  
 ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE  
 COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HOUSING

June 27, 2019

Laura Fortman, Commissioner  
 Maine Department of Labor  
 54 State House Station  
 Augusta, ME 04333-0054

Dear Commissioner Fortman:

During the First Regular Session of the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing voted "Ought Not To Pass" on LD 1211 (An Act To Protect Farm Workers by Allowing Them To Organize for the Purpose of Collective Bargaining) and LD 1251 (An Act To Make Agricultural Workers and Other Workers Employees under the Wage and Hour Laws) with the understanding that the Department of Labor would be willing to convene interested parties during the interim to further discuss wages, hours worked and collective bargaining for agricultural and seasonal employees.

As the chairs of the Committee, we are writing to request that when engaging in these discussions, the Department ensure the following are included: the sponsor of these bills, Representative Thom Harnett; Representative Mike Sylvester; representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry; and other interested parties as deemed appropriate, including at a minimum farmers and farm worker organizations. We understand these bills raise complicated issues, but we hope that consensus can be reached that finds a way to achieve the overall goals of LD 1211 and LD 1251 without harming our State's important agricultural sector.

We request that you provide the Committee with a brief overview of the discussions, a list of participants in these discussions, and any consensus reached by participants by January 15, 2020. Feel free to include any other information you feel may be valuable to the Committee. Thank you in advance for your time on these issues.

Sincerely,

*Shenna Bellows*  
 Shenna Bellows, Senate Chair

*Michael Sylvester*  
 Michael A. Sylvester, House Chair

cc: Michael Roland, Director, Bureau of Labor Standards, Maine Department of Labor  
 Amanda E. Beal, Commissioner, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
 Members, Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing  
 Representative Thom Harnett