



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo urges DOL to reject Farm Labor Board recommendation

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO September 8, 2022

| ISSUE: **FARM LABORERS WAGE BOARD; AGRICULTURE; FARMS**

New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, is urging state Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon to reject the New York Farm Laborers Wage Board's recommendation to lower the overtime threshold for farms. The commissioner now has 45 days to either accept or reject the board's recommendation, which was approved by a 2-1 vote.

In a letter to Commissioner Reardon, Sen. Griffo wrote that lowering the threshold to 40 hours would have "devastating consequences throughout the economy" and would hurt New York's farmers and consumers.

"While I understand that the Board is attempting to soften the impact of its decision by implementing the threshold change over a ten-year period, the change is unacceptable and will cause irreparable harm to New York's farmers," **Sen. Griffo wrote to Commissioner Reardon.** "I encourage you to reject the recommendation of the Board and maintain the current 60-hour threshold that was established in 2019."

Sen. Griffo has been critical of and did not support legislation creating the three-member wage board in 2019. The board was tasked with studying overtime pay for farmworkers and consists of representatives from the New York Farm Bureau, the AFL-CIO and a member

who is selected by the state Department of Labor.

“I am disappointed by the Farm Laborers Wage Board recommendation to reduce the overtime threshold from 60 hours to 40 hours and appreciate that New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher has come out in strong opposition to this action,” **said Sen. Griffo.** “I recognize and respect the important role that farmworkers play in the state’s agriculture industry. However, this recommendation, if imposed, will have devastating consequences for many farms throughout the state and, sadly, force even more to go out of business.”

The full text of Sen. Griffo’s letter to Commissioner Reardon is below:

Roberta Reardon

Commissioner

New York State Department of Labor

Building 12, State Campus

Albany, NY 12240

Dear Commissioner Reardon,

Today the New York Farm Laborers Wage Board made the recommendation to lower the overtime threshold to 40 hours. While I understand that the Board is attempting to soften the impact of its decision by implementing the threshold change over a ten-year period, the change is unacceptable and will cause irreparable harm to New York’s farmers. I encourage you to reject the recommendation of the Board and maintain the current 60 hour threshold that was established in 2019.

The state of the economy is such that if the overtime threshold were lowered to the level recommended by the Board it would have devastating consequences throughout the economy. The everyday struggles of New York's locally owned farms have been well documented over the last several years; however, the relationship between these small businesses and the customers they serve has come into better focus due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the current state of the economy. For the state to have a direct impact on the further increase in the price of goods would be governmental and economic malpractice – we simply cannot afford to further burden New Yorkers financially.

With this in mind, I would again encourage you to reject the Board's recommendation and maintain the overtime threshold that currently exists.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Griffo

Senator, 47th District

Cc: Richard Ball, Commissioner, NYS Department of Agriculture