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Memorandum in support S. 1291/A.4762

Enacts the *Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act*, removing the legislative exclusions denying farmworkers the right to collect bargaining, a day of rest, overtime pay, disability and unemployment insurance, etc.

Rural & Migrant Ministry, a multi-faith organization that serves farmworkers throughout New York, raises its voice in support of the *Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act*.

The Ministry is the official arm of the following religious bodies:

- Capital Area & Mid-Hudson Baptist Associations
- The Presbyteries of Albany and Hudson River
- New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
- The Regional Synod of New York, Reformed Church in America
- The Episcopal Diocese of New York
- The Roman Catholic Dioceses of Albany and Rochester
- New York Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers)
- New York Conference of the United Church of Christ

In their name, we ask the legislature to change those laws that deny farmworkers the same rights and protections as most other laborers. We firmly believe it is the just and right thing to do.

The basic issue before us is **that the law is unequal**. New York gives basic human rights and protections to most of its residents, but excludes the farmworkers. We treat farmworkers, people who are also hard working men and women, who also contribute to our economy, pay taxes and raise wonderful children, as second-class citizens. We depend on them for our wellbeing, and when they ask to be treated fairly – we say, **NO**. This is immoral and unjust.

Seventy years have passed since Jim Crow-era racial bias caused farmworkers to be excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act and other important New Deal protections. New York has perpetuated the exclusion of farmworkers from labor rights, while generously supporting the agricultural industry with tax breaks and subsidies. It is not time for some parity for the agricultural workforce. Let 2015 be the year that marked the end of this shameful legacy of exclusion, and allow us to say with moral certainty that New York honors the dignity of all.

The Rural & Migrant Ministry strongly supports the enactment of the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act.