



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

April 23, 2024

The 131st Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 131st Legislature:

By the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing L.D. 525, *An Act to Enact the Agricultural Employees Concerted Activity Protection Act*.

L.D. 525 would create a new legal framework governing labor-management relations in Maine's agricultural sector. The bill would authorize agricultural workers to engage in certain concerted activity, and create a new regulatory structure for complaints, hearings, and enforcement by the Maine Labor Relations Board. This is complex legislation with cross references to federal law, including the National Labor Relations Act.

Farming is a cornerstone of rural Maine, our economy, and our way of life. Farming delivers fresh, homegrown, and nutritious food, grown by people we often know and trust, to our tables, and it preserves open space and conserves the scenic beauty that makes Maine special. Unfortunately, farmers are now facing a multitude of serious threats to their livelihood ranging from the severe weather that is likely to become worse as the effects of climate change intensify, to PFAS contamination, to inflation, to price pressures, and so much more. These serious challenges are taking a terrible toll, with Maine having lost more than 1,100 farms since 2012, including 564 farms accounting for 82,567 acres of farmland since 2017.

Against this background, I cannot subject our farmers to a complicated new set of labor laws that will require a lawyer just to understand. Now is not the time to impose a new regulatory burden on our agricultural sector, and particularly not family-owned farms that are not well positioned to know and understand their obligations under a new such law.

In states where agriculture is dominated by large factory farms and corporate interests, it is important that workers receive the protections of strong labor laws. But that bears no resemblance to the agricultural sector in Maine, where small businesses struggle to find reliable help and therefore generally treat their workers very well in order to retain them.

For these reasons, I return L.D. 525 unsigned and vetoed, and I urge the Legislature to sustain this veto.

Sincerely,

Janet T. Mills
Governor



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