



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Senator George Borrello Introduces Legislation to Abolish Farm Laborers Wage Board

GEORGE M. BORRELLO August 2, 2022

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JAMESTOWN, NY – Senator George Borrello, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, has proposed [legislation](#) that would eliminate the three-member Farm Laborers Wage Board, established as part of the Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act (FLFPA) passed in 2019.

The Wage Board is charged with making a recommendation on whether to reduce the current 60-hour overtime threshold for farm workers to 40 hours. In January, after numerous public hearings on the issue that included testimony from farmers, farm workers and industry stakeholders, the board recommended lowering the threshold, despite the fact that more than 70 percent of the testimony conveyed the harm that would be caused by such a change.

“The Wage Board has just one member with an agricultural background, making it ill-equipped to render sound, informed decisions concerning New York State’s critically-important agriculture industry,” said Senator George Borrello. “The fact that the Board ignored the vast majority of testimony, as well as data from a Cornell study that found a lower threshold would hurt both farmers and farm workers, indicates the process was more optics than anything else. Regardless, a decision of this magnitude should not rest with three unelected, unaccountable individuals, which is why this legislation is necessary.”

Senator Borrello noted that the Wage Board is set to reconvene on September 6 to present its final report regarding the overtime recommendations. With many legislators calling for a special session before the end of the summer to tackle crime and inflation, there is potential to address this issue before the board’s scheduled meeting.

Assemblyman Chris Tague, Ranking Member of the Assembly Agriculture Committee and sponsor of companion legislation in the lower house, underscored the urgency of taking action.

“The Farm Laborers Wage Board has ignored the overwhelming outcry of farmers, who provided the vast majority of the feedback the board received in near universal opposition to the lowering of the farm laborer overtime threshold. Now that it has become clear the governor and the wage board appear prepared to lower the threshold, it’s up to us to put a stop to it by disbanding the Farm Laborer’s Wage Board itself. If the board no longer exists, their recommendations cannot be implemented, and farmers throughout New York will be able to finally breathe a much-needed sigh of relief,” said Assemblyman Tague.

Senator Borrello emphasized the financial consequences of a lower threshold on both farmers and farm workers.

“New York’s farmers have long faced a competitive disadvantage with their peers in neighboring states because of the high cost of doing business here. With inflation soaring, the financial picture is more difficult than ever. A lower threshold is projected to increase labor costs by a staggering 42 percent, which will be the final nail in the coffin for many family farmers who have been struggling to stay afloat to sustain their family legacy for the next generation,” said Senator Borrello.

“The negative impact of a lower threshold will also extend to farm workers who have repeatedly stated that the lower threshold will push them to other states where they can work without restrictions.”

“There will be no ‘winners’ if this ill-conceived recommendation is adopted. That is why we need to act as soon as possible to abolish this board, and with it, its power to end agriculture as we know it in New York,” said Borrello.

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