



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara calls on governor to reject Farm Wage Board recommendation to lower overtime threshold: Urges Hochul to 'Stay at 60'

THOMAS F. O'MARA August 31, 2022

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It will risk the future of high quality, local food production. It will spark the loss of more family farms and the livelihoods these farms support across the industry and throughout hundreds of local economies.

Elmira, N.Y., August 31—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today renewed his call for New York Governor Kathy Hochul to reject a recommendation by the state's Farm Laborers

Wage Board to roll back the current 60-hour-per-week overtime threshold for farm workers to 40 hours.

The three-member Wage Board, by a vote of 2-1, handed down its recommendation earlier this year. Board member David Fisher, President of the New York Farm Bureau, voted against the move.

The Board is scheduled to meet next Tuesday and is expected to finalize the recommendation. The final decision then goes to Hochul.

O'Mara said, "It's clear that this was a preordained decision by this Wage Board. The hundreds of hours of public testimony from farmers, farm workers, farm advocates, agricultural representatives, community leaders, and legislators, including me, were still echoing across this state in near-unanimous opposition to lowering the overtime threshold, yet the Board took no time at all before coming out with a recommendation to lower it. It was a charade all along. I and many others warned that this is where the Wage Board was headed from day one."

It's up to the governor now to reject the recommendation, O'Mara said.

"Governor Hochul has continued to hear from countless individual farmers and the leaders of local farm communities. The message has been delivered from the industry's top advocates, including the New York Farm Bureau, the Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Grow NY Farms, and numerous others. Local, federal, and state representatives have made it known that we fear the undermining of an industry and, equally important, a way of life that has defined the regions we represent for generations," said O'Mara. "The Board ignored all of us and now it's up to Governor Hochul to choose common sense. Unfortunately, she appears determined to finish what former Governor Cuomo and this all-Democrat

Legislature set in motion three years ago. Let's hope not. If left to stand, it will change the face of New York State agriculture as we have known it for generations. It will risk the future of high quality, local food production. It will spark the loss of more family farms and the livelihoods these farms support across the industry and throughout hundreds of local economies."

O'Mara testified before the Board in January to express his strong opposition to lowering the threshold and has continued to speak out against it since then. [View O'Mara's January 20, 2022 testimony [HERE](#).]

In 2019, he strongly opposed the legislation, known as the "Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act," creating the Wage Board when it was enacted by then-Governor Cuomo and the Democrat majorities in the Senate and Assembly.