

News from Senator George M. Borrello 57th Senate District

Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Committee

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STATEMENT FROM SENATOR GEORGE BORRELLO ON FARM LABOR WAGE BOARD RECONVENING HEARINGS IN JANUARY

JAMESTOWN – Senator George Borrello, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, released the following statement in response to the news that the long-awaited December 15 decision on whether to lower the 60-hour farm labor overtime threshold has been postponed until January to allow for another round of public hearings on January 4, 11 and 18.

“The Department of Labor’s decision to delay a finding on the farm labor overtime threshold to allow for a new slate of public hearings is a sound one, in light of the fact that more than a year and a half has passed since the last round of hearings and a state-commissioned study by Cornell University was released just a week ago. A decision with such far-reaching and potentially devastating consequences deserves the full and vigorous review that only a public forum can provide.

“That said, I firmly believe that the facts and feedback from farmers, farm workers and those closest to the industry will overwhelmingly show that lowering the threshold would be catastrophic for the sector. Over the course of the past year, we’ve worked with a large contingent of stakeholders to educate decision makers on the financial realities facing small farms and farm workers and the challenges they’ve already endured as a result of the Farm Labor Act. If the overtime limit is lowered further, not only will farming cease to be financially viable for many families, it will accelerate the exodus of farm workers from New York to other states where they can work more and earn more.

“The hearings in January will offer added opportunities for all involved to weigh in on this critical issue. I am confident that as long as the data and honest feedback are allowed to drive the decision and not radical, special interests, maintaining the 60-hour threshold will be the unanimous conclusion of the board.”

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