

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 10, 2019

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Senators Helming, Ortt, and Colleagues: More Agriculture Hearings Needed

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that she and Senator Rob Ortt were joined by 10 of their fellow New York State legislators to raise concerns over the schedule of hearings regarding the proposed Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Act. In a letter to the respective Chairs of the Senate Agriculture Committee and Senate Labor Committee, they questioned the limited scope of only holding three hearings, which are set to take place in Nassau, Sullivan, and Madison Counties. The Capital Region, Hudson Valley, North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York – along with farm industries specific to those regions – will be without input into the sweeping legislation.

“Agriculture is the leading industry in our region and upstate New York State. Our local and state economy relies on our farmers and farm families. The Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act would have a devastating impact on the industry as a whole, especially our small family operations, and their hardworking employees. This is the busiest time of the year for the agricultural industry. Farmers and farmworkers are working tirelessly to get their fields ready for the upcoming season, and to expect them to travel great distances to weigh in on the burdensome regulations that this legislation would enact is both disappointing and disrespectful. As State Senators, we should be more accommodating to our constituents’ schedules and not to our own, especially when something this significant would negatively impact them. These regulations – unrealistic for our small farms and difficult even for our large farms – make no sense to any farmers I have spoken with and would only drive up production costs and food prices in New York State and drive more of our farms out of business. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I urge Senator Metzger and Senator Ramos to reconsider the plan for these hearings and schedule more hearings in other parts of the state, especially upstate New York,” Senator Helming said.

Senator Ortt said, “It’s disheartening to see that Senate Democrats ignored our request to host statewide hearings on the proposed farmworkers unionization legislation. This legislation will dramatically impact the leading industry across much of New York. Considering the grave harm it could have on our state’s small family farms, hard-working farm employees, and consumers, it’s unfathomable that entire geographic regions and sectors of agriculture are excluded from the discussion. Once again, I am calling on both Senators to expand their planned schedule and include hearings in the Capital Region, Hudson Valley, North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York.”

Joining Senator Helming and Senator Ortt in signing the letter were Senators Robert E. Antonacci, Rich Funke, George A. Amedore Jr., Chris Jacobs, Sue Serino, James N. Tedisco, Daphne Jordan, Betty Little, Thomas F. O'Mara, and Fred Akshar. Last month, Senator Helming, Senator Ortt, and their Senate colleagues authored a letter to the Agriculture and Labor Chairs requesting that community hearings be held across the entire state. In a study conducted by Farm Credit East, it is estimated that the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act would add at least \$299 million of costs on the backs of New York's farming community, which would reduce net farm income by a staggering 23 percent.

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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