



New York State Catholic Conference

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RICHARD E. BARNES
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

**Re: S.1291 Espaillat / A.4762 Nolan
In relation to the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**

The above-referenced legislation would address a number of the exemptions in New York's labor, public health and workers compensation laws that currently prevent farmworkers from accessing rights and privileges available to other workers in New York State.

The New York State Catholic Conference **supports** the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act, and strongly urges enactment of this legislation.

Farmworkers are excluded from many of the laws that establish worker protections, including overtime pay, employer contributions to the unemployment and workers' compensation funds, and public health protections including sanitation and housing standards. In addition to ending these exclusions, this bill would require that farmworkers be given a 24-hour day of rest in every calendar week which, whenever possible, would coincide with the laborer's traditional day for religious worship.

In December 1999, legislation was enacted eliminating farmworkers' exemption from the minimum wage laws. Enactment of this bill would continue the process of economic justice for agricultural workers. It would also grant collective bargaining rights to farm laborers.

There is no legitimate reason for treating farmworkers inequitably. They should be afforded the same rights, protections and benefits that other workers in New York State receive. It is unacceptable for farmworkers to be denied the basic labor, safety and health protections other workers enjoy. Farmworkers make a significant contribution to the production of agricultural products in this great state, and are deserving of being treated with dignity.

By recognizing the rights of farmworkers and the unique contributions of agriculture, New York can develop policies which bring economic fairness, safety, and dignity to the production of agricultural goods from which we all benefit.