New York State Catholic Conference

2017 Issue in Brief

Issue

Support the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

Background

Throughout New York State, thousands of farmworkers face difficult working conditions, subpar living conditions and a lack of basic protections. For nearly two decades, the New York State Catholic Conference has actively supported the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act to grant these hardworking individuals the same rights as every other segment of the workforce.

Messages

- Farmworkers are excluded from many 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. This bill would address these inequities, and also grant a 24-hour weekly day of rest, whenever possible, to coincide with the laborers' traditional day for religious worship.

- Our state is dependent on its family farms, and the economic arguments against this bill, as well as the unique nature of farming and harvesting, are noted. But we must not allow economic arguments to take precedence over human rights and dignity.

- At its root, there is a very simple concept to consider, and that is that every man, woman, and child, without exception, is entitled to live a life that respects his or her basic human dignity.

- It is a shame that in New York State we treat people who give us food differently than the way we treat other workers.