

"I address a strong appeal from my heart that the dignity and safety of the worker always be protected." - Pope Francis



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As Catholics, we believe in the inherent dignity of human work and in the rights of workers to decent wages and working conditions. Way back in 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote of these teachings in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ("Of New Things"). Throughout the years since, the Church has reiterated time and again that workers have the right to work befitting of their human dignity. If conditions are not safe or fair, they have the right to band together to collectively redress their grievances.

In New York State, farmworkers are among the most vulnerable workers. These tens of thousands of workers are excluded from basic labor laws that cover virtually all other workers.

For many years, the New York State Catholic Conference of Bishops and many other faith-based organizations, from Baptist to Buddhist, have advocated for the passage of the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**. This bill would simply give farmworkers the same rights afforded other workers in our state.

In the words of the NYS Catholic Conference:

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.

Please use the materials in this packet to educate your parishioners so you can gather many petition signatures over Public Policy Weekend, on February 9-10 or whatever weekend in February works best for your parish.

This packet includes the following materials for use in your parish/school:

1. Instructions on where to send the completed petitions
2. Advice on effective ways to gather petition signatures
3. Petition in single page format and in postcard format— you can use either one
4. Bulletin insert on the bill
5. Bulletin announcements
6. Prayers of the Faithful
7. Pulpit Announcements
8. Additional information on the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act** and answers to some questions about the bill

What Do We Do With Petitions?

Please make 2 copies of each signed petition sheets and send **the copies and the originals** to your regional Catholic Charities Justice & Peace staff **by March 6.**

If you're using the postcard version, each signer will have to receive one card and sign it three places. Cut the cards apart after they are signed, band them together in separate piles for each elected official, and submit all of them **by March 6.**

Counties of the Diocese	Justice and Peace Staff Contact Information
Cayuga/Ontario/ Seneca/Wayne/Yates	Jean Paul Kandolo Catholic Charities of Finger Lakes 94 Exchange St. Geneva, NY 14456 315-789-2686 ext. 112 Jean.Paul.Kandolo@dor.org
Chemung/Schuyler/Tioga	Kathy Dubel Catholic Charities of Chemung & Schuyler 215 E. Church St. Suite 101 Elmira, NY 14901 607-734-9784 x 2135 Kathy.Dubel@dor.org
Livingston	Tabitha Brewster Catholic Charities of Livingston County 34 East St. Street Mt Morris, NY 14510 585-658-4466 x 13 Tabitha.Brewster@dor.org
Tompkins	Laurie Konwinski Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga 324 West Buffalo St. Ithaca, NY 14850 607-272-5062 x 12 Laurie.Konwinski@dor.org
Monroe	Ruth Marchetti Catholic Family Center 87 N. Clinton Ave. Rochester, NY 14604 585-267-9583 RMarchetti@cfcrochester.org
Steuben	Tess McKinley Catholic Charities of Steuben County 23 Liberty St. Bath, NY 14810 607-776-8085 ext. 2211; Tess.Mckinley@dor.org

Advice on Gathering Petition Signatures: The Power of the Clipboard!



Let's work together to collect **thousands of signatures** from around our diocese.

Let's show our state elected officials that we really do care about justice!

Over the years, we've learned practices that help to inspire more parishioners to join in and sign the petition. There are more effective ways to gather petitions signatures than to table after Mass, when everyone is leaving church. Try this instead:

In the weeks leading up to Public Policy Weekend:

- ◆ Include the bulletin notices
- ◆ Print the text of the petition in the bulletin two weeks prior to Public Policy Weekend
- ◆ Give time during Mass for a short presentation on the issue by social ministry committee members one week prior to Public Policy Weekend

On Public Policy Weekend:

- ◆ Place the petition on clipboards with pens in every pew (or every other pew)
- ◆ Talk about the issue during the homily and invite people to sign the petition right then
- ◆ Collect the petitions with the second collection

OR

- ◆ Give a short presentation after Communion and invite people to sign the petition right then
- ◆ Have them leave the clipboards in the pews and collect them after Mass

Thanks to Deacon Claude Lester for sharing the best practices from his parish, St. Benedict's of Canandaigua /Bloomfield. His parish regularly collects 400+ signatures on the petitions!

Showing our love and speaking out for poor and vulnerable people is part of our faith and part of our work as Christians. The origin of the word "liturgy" is "public working". How fitting that during our Sunday liturgy, which is the work of the *public*, of the *People of God*, we take seriously the call to put love into action and to work together for the Common Good by doing this advocacy.

Name of Parish: _____

Count of all signatures on this page: _____

2019 Public Policy Weekend—Diocese of Rochester
Petition supporting the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

The labor of tens of thousands of farmworkers brings food to our tables. However, New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. These exclusions mean that, unlike other workers, farmworkers do not have the right to: a guaranteed day of rest per week; overtime pay; employer contributions to disability insurance; public health protections including sanitation and housing standards; or protections while bargaining collectively.

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. Economic policies that protect family farms are essential. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers. We believe that the sacred human dignity of every man, woman, and child, without exception, should be respected and that the basic rights of all workers should be recognized.

Therefore, we urge the New York State Assembly, Senate, and Governor Cuomo to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act** ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.

Signature

Print Name

Address

1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____
7	_____	_____	_____
8	_____	_____	_____
9	_____	_____	_____
10	_____	_____	_____

SIGN ALL THREE CARDS WITH YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS

The labor of tens of thousands of farmworkers brings food to our tables. However, New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. These exclusions mean that, unlike other workers, farmworkers do not have the right to: a guaranteed day of rest per week; overtime pay; employer contributions to disability insurance; public health protections including sanitation and housing standards; or protections while bargaining collectively.

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. Economic policies that protect family farms are essential. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers. We believe that the sacred human dignity of every man, woman, and child, without exception, should be respected and that the basic rights of all workers should be recognized.

Therefore, we urge the New York State Assembly, Senate, and Governor Cuomo to support the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.

Dear Governor Cuomo,

New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. We urge you to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**, ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Dear Assembly Member,

New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. We urge you to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**, ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Dear Senator,

New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. We urge you to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**, ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Public Policy Weekend: Justice for Farmworkers

Here in our Diocese, parishes participate in the annual Public Policy Weekend every February, when parishioners speak out with one voice on an issue related to Catholic Social Teaching. This year that issue is the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**, which would grant equal labor rights to the workers who milk cows, tend animals, and plant, harvest and pack fruits and vegetables in New York State.

DID YOU KNOW? Under New York State Labor Law, farmworkers do **NOT** have the right to:

- ◇ Overtime pay
- ◇ A day of rest per week if the worker chooses to take it
- ◇ Employer-provided disability insurance
- ◇ Public health protections including sanitation and housing standards
- ◇ Protections when bargaining collectively



Farmworkers in Cayuga County

These are basic rights granted to virtually all other workers in our state. The people who are the backbone of our state's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry are excluded from these protections. This bill would end those exclusions.

Why does the Catholic Church care about this group of workers?

The Gospel demands that we stand on the side of the poor and marginalized, because that's what Jesus did. Farmworkers are among the most vulnerable workers in New York.

As Pope Francis consistently reminds us, our faith calls us to protect and welcome immigrants. In our part of New York State, many of those who have come to this country seeking a better life are farmworkers.

As Catholics, we believe in the fundamental dignity of human work and the rights of workers to decent wages, safe working conditions and protection when collectively redressing grievances. This has been part of our Church teaching for over a century. Protecting workplace dignity is fundamental to protecting human dignity.

What about the farmers?

Agriculture is a multi-billion dollar industry in New York State, but we know many farms are struggling financially. We urge our state elected officials to address the needs of farmers along with farmworkers. Both deserve our support. We believe that public policies can be enacted that grant farmworkers their basic rights and that address the needs of farmers as well.

Bulletin Notices

Please include these notices in your church bulletin in the weeks leading up to Public Policy Weekend. Be sure to include the dates of the weekend when you'll be collecting the petitions in your parish.

Week 1: Catholics Speak Out for Justice: Equal Rights for Farmworkers

Tens of thousands of farmworkers in New York milk cows, tend animals, and plant, prune, harvest and pack fruits and vegetables. Despite their hard work, farmworkers are not treated equally in our labor laws. For example, unlike other workers, they do not receive overtime pay or disability insurance. You can help right this wrong! In the coming weeks you'll have the opportunity to sign our Diocese-wide petition asking our New York State legislature to change this law. Keep reading your weekly bulletin to learn more about this issue.

Week 2: Catholics Speak Out for Justice: Equal Rights for Farmworkers

Protecting workplace dignity is essential to protecting human dignity in general. As Catholics, we believe that workers have fundamental rights, including the right to organize themselves to petition for improved working conditions. This has been part of Church teaching for over 125 years. In New York State, farmworkers are excluded from this and other basic rights granted to other workers. They can be fired if they collectively bring a grievance to their supervisor. During our upcoming Public Policy Weekend, please plan to sign the Diocese-wide petition to our state elected officials, urging them to support equal labor rights for farmworkers.

Week 3: Catholics Speak Out for Justice: Equal Rights for Farmworkers

Next week you'll have the opportunity to sign our diocese-wide Public Policy Weekend petition in support of farmworkers. It will read: *The labor of tens of thousands of farmworkers brings food to our tables. However, New York State labor law categorically denies farmworkers basic rights and protections enjoyed by virtually all other workers. These exclusions mean that, unlike other workers, farmworkers do not have the right to: a guaranteed day of rest per week; overtime pay; employer contributions to disability insurance; public health protections including sanitation and housing standards; or protections while bargaining collectively.*

Farming is a vital part of the New York State economy. Economic policies that protect family farms are essential. We urge the legislature to support New York State farmers along with farmworkers. We believe that the sacred human dignity of every man, woman, and child, without exception, should be respected and that the basic rights of all workers should be recognized.

*Therefore, we urge the New York State Assembly, Senate, and Governor Cuomo to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act** ending the exclusion of farmworkers from basic rights and granting them equal treatment under our labor laws.*

Week 4: Catholics Speak Out for Justice: Equal Rights for Farmworkers

You can be a voice for justice TODAY. In the words of the NYS Catholic Conference, "There is no legitimate reason for treating farmworkers inequitably." Today you can support justice for farmworkers by signing our Diocese-wide petition to our state elected officials in favor of the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**. This bill would give tens of thousands of farmworkers in our State equal labor rights. Put your faith into action. Stand with them and take the time to sign the petition.

Prayers of the Faithful for Use During Mass

These prayers can be used on Public Policy Weekend and the weeks leading up to it, to pray for the success of our advocacy effort and to remind parishioners of the importance of the issue of justice for farmworkers.

Let us pray for our brothers and sisters who work hard milking cows, tending animals, planting, pruning, harvesting and packing fruits and vegetables on farms in our community and across New York state.

R. Lord, hear our prayer

That the human dignity of farmworkers and all workers will be respected and protected in the workplace with just wages, safe working conditions, disability insurance, a day of rest, and overtime pay. We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer

We pray for an end to the exclusion of farmworkers from the basic workplace protections and rights enjoyed by most other workers in New York State.

R. Lord, hear our prayer

In thanksgiving for farmworkers whose labor makes food available for our tables and for farmers who respect the dignity of their farmworkers. We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer

That our state elected officials would have the wisdom and courage to grant farmworkers basic workplace rights. We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer

Pulpit Announcements For Use During Mass

Week before Public Policy Weekend:

Next weekend, our parish will be gathering petition signatures for the annual diocesan-wide Public Policy Weekend. We'll be advocating for basic labor rights for farmworkers. The people who milk cows, tend animals, and harvest fruits and vegetables in New York State are excluded from workplace rights that virtually all other workers in our state have already. Read today's bulletin for more details on the bill we are asking our elected officials to support, called the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**. Please plan to sign the petition next week to voice your support for equal rights and simple fairness for these workers.

Public Policy Weekend:

Today our parish is participating in Public Policy Weekend, happening around the diocese. You have the opportunity today to speak out for justice for farmworkers. The people who milk cows, tend animals, and harvest fruits and vegetables in New York State are excluded from basic workplace rights that virtually all other workers in our state have already. You can help right this injustice by signing the petition asking our state elected officials to support the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act**. With enough support, this bill may finally be the year that it becomes law. Please put your faith in action and sign the petition. (*Explain where they will find the petition and how they need to sign it.*)

Additional Information on the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

Key Provisions: Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

New York's farmworkers form the backbone of the state's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry, but these workers are excluded from basic labor law protections under state and federal law.

This statutory relic of the Jim Crow era deprives tens of thousands of farmworkers of the rights that other workers take for granted.

The Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act would end this injustice. This new law would:

- Establish an 8 hour workday for farmworkers
- Provide farmworkers overtime pay of at least time and one half after 8 hours of work
- Allow farmworkers one day of rest each week, which they may decline
- Give farmworkers the right to organize and bargain collectively for the purposes of representing and protecting their interests
- Ensure that farmworker housing facilities meet basic standards under the Sanitary Code, including: structurally safe buildings, clean water, adequate light and ventilation, and facilities for sewage disposal
- Require a foreman or supervisor who learns that a farmworker is injured on the job to inform the farm owner of that injury
- Allow farmworkers to receive disability benefits when unable to work due to non-job related sickness or injuries
- Prohibit employers from discharging or discriminating against a farmworker who attempts to seek workers' compensation for injuries suffered on the job by requesting a claim form
- Require the posting of a notice in English and Spanish that informs farmworkers of their right to workers' compensation benefits, as required by law

Answers for Some of the Questions about the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act

Overtime Pay: Unlike other hourly workers, farmworkers do not have the right to “time and a half” after 40 hours a work per week. Dairy farmworkers regularly work much more than 40 hours per week, sometimes 60 or more hours.

Farmworkers who harvest fruits and vegetables like apples and sweet corn are usually not paid by the hour, but by piece rate. They earn a few cents for each bin they pick or crate they pack. By law their weekly pay has to be at least equivalent to the minimum wage for the number of hours they work per week. They often exceed that minimum wage rate because they can skillfully pick very quickly and efficiently. Similarly, were they to be entitled to overtime, their weekly pay would have to be at least equivalent to minimum wage for the first 40 hours of the work, then to time and a half for the hours after 40.

Support for Farmers: We know that opposition to the **Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act** stems from concerns about the costs it might incur for farm owners. We recognize that many farms, particularly small family farms, are facing financial difficulties. The New York State Catholic Conference and our Diocese have long supported legislation to help farmers. With our support a recent NYS bill was passed and signed into law to provide tax credits to farmers who donate their products to food pantries. We’ve also worked to pass legislation to provide farmers with incentives to preserve farm land. We urge the state legislature to address issues of New York State agriculture while at the same time supporting the basic rights of farmworkers. We can do both! Farmworkers deserve equal labor rights and farmers deserve support to keep doing their important work.