



**For Immediate Release**

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**Fairness for Farmworkers Coalition Announces Campaign to Pass New Farmworker Rights Legislation in Massachusetts**

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Farmworkers, advocates, and labor and community organizations across Massachusetts have formed the Fairness for Farmworkers Coalition to propose and support the new Fairness for Farmworkers Act (“FFA”), guaranteeing basic labor protections for Massachusetts farmworkers.

“The time has come to recognize the invaluable contributions farmworkers make to the Massachusetts economy and abolish the \$8.00 substandard minimum wage that has been allowed for farmworkers in our state,” says Claudia Quintero, a member of the coalition and Staff Attorney for the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Project at Central West Justice Center.

The Fairness for Farmworkers Act seeks to remedy the historical nationwide exclusion of farmworkers from state and federal wage and hour laws. The Act will provide three critical improvements in workplace rights for farmworkers:

- a) Abolish Massachusetts’ current farmworker-only subminimum wage of \$8/hour and require all farmworkers be paid at least the standard minimum wage of \$13.50/hour most other Massachusetts workers are entitled to earn under state law.
- b) Institute overtime payment for seasonal farmworkers after 55 hours of work per week
- c) Establish an optional day of rest for farmworkers.

Sponsored by Western Massachusetts legislators Rep. Carlos Gonzalez and Sen. Adam Gomez, with overwhelming support by Rep. Paul Mark and Senator Adam Hinds, the new Fairness for Farmworkers Act, H. 1979, S. 1205, will dramatically improve the lives of farmworkers and their families.

“Our farmworker community is grateful to Senator Gomez and Rep. Gonzalez, and Senator Hinds and Rep. Mark, for seeing our circumstances and standing with us as we try to achieve recognition and respect for farmworkers here in Massachusetts and set an example for other states across our nation,” said Claudia Rosales, Co-Director of the Pioneer Valley Workers Center.

“It is unconscionable that farmworkers, such an essential work force in our food-supply chain, are left out of earning overtime pay, despite working at least 60 hours a week during peak harvest season,” Quintero continues. The Fairness for Farmworker coalition is calling for overtime over 55 hours for seasonal farmworkers, “the right to earn overtime is more than fair for these workers who put food on the tables of Massachusetts residents,” states Quintero.

Coalition advocates invite legislators, media, and the public to join the bilingual one-hour legislative briefing hearing on the *Fairness for Farmworkers Act* on Tuesday September 14, 2021 at 10 a.m. RSVP to [bit.ly/FFFInMA](https://bit.ly/FFFInMA) for the zoom link.

Today, the Coalition is releasing *Fruits of the Past*, a 45-page white paper detailing the facts, policies and reasons to enact the FFA. A copy of *Fruits of the Past* is available for downloading at <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/fairness-farmworkers-act>.

The FFA is endorsed by:

ACLU of Massachusetts

Central West Justice Center

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Pioneer Valley Workers Center

Western Massachusetts, Area Labor Federation

Massachusetts AFL-CIO

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Local 1459