



**Testimony in support of  
H.1979/S.1205 An Act Establishing Fairness for Agricultural Laborers  
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development  
By Jennifer Muroff, LWVMA Immigration Specialist  
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Remember June's 100+ degree heat? It was excruciating to be outside, even for few moments. While we enjoy eating our strawberries in the air conditioning, agricultural workers in Massachusetts are harvesting our food up to twelve hours per day in extreme heat--day after day--without a day of rest. They earn \$8 per hour, which was the minimum wage from thirteen years ago, in 2008. Agricultural workers are not paid overtime rates after forty hours per week, not allowed a day of rest, and many times paid for the work by the pound.

Agricultural workers, along with domestic workers, were exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 due to the structural racism of the Jim Crow South and Southern plantation owners at that time. After 83 years, Massachusetts has the opportunity to change that and follow the lead of New York, California and Oregon by passing this bill to increase the minimum wage for farmworkers. The 13,000 Massachusetts agricultural workers, a primarily Latino and immigrant workforce, deserve a fair wage.

The LWVMA, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, believes that all levels of government have the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing, for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. LWVMA believes that government should promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families in order to prevent or reduce poverty. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should promote and fund educational programs and materials that seek to inform all workers, including documented and undocumented immigrants, of their rights in the workplace. The League stands with immigrants in solidarity and our partners in the immigrant rights community.

For all these reasons, the LWVMA supports this bill and asks that you favorably report this bill out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.