



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Revenue
In support of H.2812/S.1837 *An Act Establishing Fairness for Agricultural Laborers*
By Amy Cooper, LWVMA Immigration Specialist
October 24, 2023**

According to climate scientists at NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), the last eight summers have been the hottest ever, and this trend toward warming is expected to continue. If you remember last summer, there were days when it was excruciating to be outside for just a few minutes. Imagine how agricultural workers in Massachusetts must feel. They harvest our food, working up to twelve hours a day every day in extreme heat, without a day of rest. They earn \$8 per hour, which was the minimum wage from fifteen years ago, in 2008. Agricultural workers are not paid overtime rates after working 40 hours a week, are not allowed a day of rest, and often are paid for their work by the pound.

Agricultural workers, along with domestic workers, were exempt from the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 due to the structural racism of the Jim Crow South and Southern plantation owners at that time. After 85 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 and more humane working conditions.

The LWVMA, representing 44 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 in solidarity with immigrants and our partners in the immigrant rights community.

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