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NYS DOL Announces Farm Labor Wage Board Hearings

The New York State Department of Labor (DOL) has announced that the wage board will hold five hearings across the state beginning this Friday and going through April. The wage board was created by the recently enacted Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act and is statutorily required to hold its first hearing by March 1st to consider lowering the current 60-hour work week threshold for overtime.

New York Farm Bureau was given one seat on the three-member board and will be represented by NYFB President David Fisher, a dairy farmer from Madrid, NY. The other two members include Brenda McDuffie, appointed by the DOL Commissioner, and Denis Hughes, representing AFL-CIO. McDuffie is the chair of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency and President and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League. Hughes has served as chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and is past President of NY AFL-CIO.

The wage board is scheduled to meet at the locations below. All meetings will begin at 11 a.m.

- **Friday 2/28** - Albany – New York State Museum Cultural Education Center, Clark Auditorium, 222 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12230
- **Friday 3/13** - Syracuse – Onondaga Community College, Storer Auditorium, 4585 W. Seneca Turnpike, Syracuse, NY 13215
- **Monday 3/23** – Binghamton – Binghamton University, Symposium Hall, Center of Excellence Building Innovative Technology Complex, 45 Murray Hill Road, Vestal, NY 13850
- **Thursday 4/16** - Long Island – Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville, NY 11738
- **Thursday 4/23** – Batavia- Genesee Community College, William Stuart Forum, 1 College Rd, Batavia, NY 14020

New York Farm Bureau strongly encourages members to plan to attend and speak at one of the public hearings and/or submit public comments. [Click here](#) to register to speak and for more information on the hearings. NYFB will be working to assist farmers to share their stories with the wage board. [Click here](#) for a guidance document on how to organize your testimony. [Click here](#) for “do’s and don’ts” when speaking to employees about the hearings. Finally, [here](#) is additional information about what to expect when testifying.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your field advisor or member of NYFB’s public policy department. Click [here](#) for staff directory.

In addition, NYFB released a public statement about the wage board hearings. It reads:

New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher will be one of the three appointed members of the wage board announced today to consider whether agriculture can withstand a lower overtime threshold beyond the current 60-hour work week.

What will be especially challenging for farmers and their employees alike is the timing of the statutorily required hearings. The law directs the wage board to hold its first meeting by March 1 with a report due by December of this year. It will be incredibly difficult for board members to reasonably determine if the overtime threshold should be justifiably lowered. Farmers have just started to implement changes on their farms to comply with the new law and are still determining what is best for their small businesses and employees. Further, crops are not even in the ground for the spring planting season, let alone having no real world examples of how this new law will impact harvest season. This short window of time also does not allow any ability to see how different growing conditions due to extreme weather can impact overtime needs.

New York Farm Bureau strongly believes it will take data from multiple growing seasons to appropriately evaluate the economic realities and labor challenges facing New York agriculture as a result of the new overtime threshold implemented only weeks ago. And until that can happen, it should not be lowered.

New York Farm Bureau appreciates that the Department of Labor accepted our organization’s suggestion to hold the wage board hearings in areas of the state that provide easier access for the farming community to attend. We highly encourage our members to take the time to speak at one of the hearings or submit public comments to help better inform the wage board members.



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