



June 6, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

As representatives of the approximately 35,500 family-operated farms in New York and supporting agribusinesses, we are extremely disappointed in your decision to abandon the families growing and raising food across this state by not defending the state's labor laws against the NYCLU constitutional lawsuit.

Our organizations represent the vast diversity of New York's agricultural community and have partnered with you for the better part of six years to continue to strengthen New York's rural communities through the good jobs and opportunities provided by farms. We have worked together on reducing government red-tape that was strangling economic development and growth. Together, we have lauded new processing businesses and the emersion of new agriculture-related industries.

However, after these joint efforts to move New York forward through agricultural development, your statements supporting the merits of this lawsuit lend credence to the insulting and disparaging assertions of activists that farmers mistreat their workers. This is unfortunate because you have seen first-hand farm owners working alongside their employees. You are also aware of the added benefits that farmworkers enjoy, which can include complimentary housing and utilities, skills training, participating in retirement plans, and even earning equity in the farm business. In fact, your own Departments of Labor, Health, and Agriculture and Markets are involved in overseeing and inspecting farm operations to ensure that the multitude of state and federal labor laws that specifically protect farmworkers are met.

The reasons that agriculture was exempt from collective bargaining by the state in 1937 are still valid today. Agriculture is reliant on Mother Nature and not the controlled climate of a factory. Farm schedules are determined by the weather forecast, the ripening of crops, and the needs of livestock. The current law recognizes this, and the need for food to be grown right here in our state. Combined with already higher taxes, a stifling regulatory environment, and a minimum wage increase this year, collective bargaining would make the continued operation of many family farms untenable. Farmers, who we have always contended are tied to the land, are now seriously investigating moving their businesses out of state and closing their doors. Your actions this year have left them feeling abandoned by the state they call home. And your actions jeopardize the success of your own "Taste NY" and "New York Certified" programs.

We strongly urge you to reconsider your position regarding the NYCLU lawsuit and instead defend and uphold the laws of this state, which recognize the unique and very challenging circumstances that farmers in the Northeast, and in particular, New York State, must already overcome in order to produce food for our residents.

Sincerely,



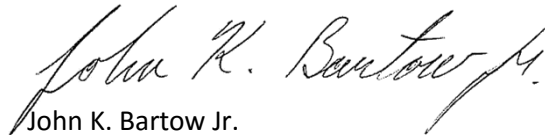
Dean E. Norton  
President  
New York Farm Bureau



Neal Rea  
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Agri-Mark, Inc.



Brad Keating  
Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer  
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Rick Grant, Ph.D.  
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