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**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF THE  
FARMWORKER FAIR LABOR PRACTICES ACT**

Interfaith Impact of New York State (IINYS) supports the farmworker fair labor practices act, A1867/S2247, which would grant collective bargaining rights, workers' compensation and unemployment benefits, and other rights to farmworkers, and would change New York labor laws, which at this time categorically exclude farmworkers from basic workers' rights and protections.

IINYS is a coalition of individuals and congregations from Protestant, Reform Jewish, Unitarian Universalist and other faith traditions working for the common good through progressive religious advocacy.

Among other provisions, A1867/S2247 would require employers of farm laborers to allow at least 24 consecutive hours of rest each week (voluntary on the part of workers); provide for an 8-hour workday for farm laborers and require an overtime rate of one-and-one-half the normal compensation; grant collective bargaining rights to farm laborers; and ensure that the sanitary code shall apply to all farm and food processing labor camps intended to house migrant workers.

New York has excluded farmworkers from labor rights by exempting "service on a farm" from the definition of what constitutes an "employee." Recently, the State Legislature addressed some of the exclusions by granting farmworkers the same minimum wage as other workers and by providing drinking water and toilets in the fields. These were small but important steps toward economic justice for these excluded workers. Now, it is time for New York State to affirm that it is committed to the principle that all workers are entitled to dignity, respect and equal rights.

The New York State Constitution, in Article I, Section 17, declares: "*Labor of human beings is not a commodity nor an article of commerce, and shall never be so considered or construed.*" This section of the Constitution goes on to state: "*Employees shall have the right to organize and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.*" Passage and enactment of A1867/S2247 would honor our Constitution's clear statement.

It is time for New York to release farmworkers from their status as second-class workers. Interfaith IMPACT of New York State urges passage of A1867/S2247 during the regular 2009 session of the Legislature.

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