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**Farmworker Justice Statement: California and New York minimum wage increases will benefit many farmworkers, but more progress is needed**

**Washington, DC-** Many farmworkers in the United States are paid the minimum wage and therefore will benefit from the minimum wage increases that California and New York plan to adopt. Farmworker Justice applauds California's and New York State's actions and all of the workers and advocates who fought hard for the increases. However, we are somewhat disappointed with the shortcomings in the New York legislation and even in California there is more policy change needed.

Farmworker Justice is pleased that the California legislation will boost wages for workers statewide from the current \$10.00 an hour to \$10.50 in January and gradually up to \$15.00 by 2022 and will be adjusted annually for inflation after that. While some farmworkers earn more than the minimum wage, the increase will affect tens of thousands of California farmworkers.

California legislators should now pass the bill extending overtime pay to agricultural workers, who deserve equality with other workers.

While workers in New York will also receive a sorely needed minimum wage increase above the current \$9.00 per hour, Governor Cuomo compromised on the minimum wage for upstate New York, where the minimum wage will increase by \$0.70 a year going up to only \$12.50 by 2021. There are many farms, as well as urban areas, in upstate New York. New York City's minimum wage will increase to \$15 by the end of 2018. New York City's suburbs will be given a few more years to reach the \$15 minimum.

According to media reports, the New York budget deal also "includes \$30 million set aside to help farmers pay the higher wage to workers." That money could be better spent improving farmworkers' conditions and enforcement of their rights.

The NY Farm Bureau expressed strong opposition to the bill, even after the subsidy was announced. Growers' claims of the effects of wage increases on food production are overblown. Agricultural labor economist and professor at UC-Davis Philip Martin, predicts that if farmworker wages go up by 47%, household grocery bills would go up just \$21.15 a year, or \$1.76 a month. Moreover, California is by far the most successful agricultural state and has a higher minimum wage, collective bargaining rights for farmworkers and other labor protections.

New York farmworker advocates and allies have come close to passing legislation to grant farmworkers rest breaks, collective bargaining rights and other protections that workers in other sectors have. The state legislature should pass the farmworker bill of rights.

The NY compromise is disappointing due to its limitations, but it is a significant increase, that will help many farmworkers in the state's substantial dairy industry, apple harvests and other produce farms. NY's current minimum wage of \$9 and California's current minimum wage of \$10 already are substantially higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour and that of other states with major agricultural sectors.

We at Farmworker Justice hope that the worker organizing that led California and New York to increase their minimum wages will help pave the way for a federal minimum wage increase as well as improvements in other states.

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***Farmworker Justice*** is a nonprofit litigation, advocacy and education organization that seeks to empower migrant and seasonal farmworkers to improve wages, working conditions, immigration policy, health, occupational safety and access to justice.