



DATE: April 18, 2024

TO: House Committee on General & Housing

FROM: Vermont Dairy Producers Alliance

RE: S.102 - An act relating to expanding employment protections and collective bargaining rights

With regret, members of the Vermont Dairy Producers Alliance (VDPA) oppose S.102 as passed by the Senate. The Senate removed a very important provision which exempts agricultural workers from S.102. Our members uphold the best practices for employee protection and view our employees as integral to our farm operations. Vermont farms belong and actively participate in programs which audit employee treatment, training, and care via the FARM Program for the Dairy Farmers of America Cooperative and Agri-Mark. However, as written the removal of the exemption could lead to increased labor costs for farmers, potentially threatening their ability to remain competitive in a global market. Additionally, it could complicate the management of seasonal and fluctuating work demands, ultimately making it harder for farms to continue to be competitive.

Next to employees, a farm's herd is the most important asset to a farm. Without the herd, Vermont farms wouldn't have these jobs to offer. Importantly, the exemption in current law ensures animal welfare. Part of that reasoning is because should the farm workers decide to strike, it would leave animals uncared for and could ultimately lead to a serious animal welfare issue. Cows must be milked on a schedule, or they can become sick and can be in pain when not relieved of their milk.

We appreciate your time and respectfully ask that your committee reinstate the farm worker exemption.

**About the Vermont Dairy Producers Alliance: VDPA is comprised of dairy farmers and partners of the farming industry. The Alliance supports and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while being mindful of the environmental impacts to Vermont's working landscape and waterways.*