

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Testimony:
Agriculture & Markets/ Parks & Recreation (1-27-26)**

Guillermo A. Maciel
Member - New York Farm Bureau
Coordinating Committee - Columbia County Sanctuary Movement
PO Box 958
North Chatham, NY
12136

Good morning my name is Guillermo Alfonso Maciel. I am a newly minted New York Farm Bureau member and part of the Coordinating Committee for the Columbia County Sanctuary movement. I am a first generation Mexican American. I am a farmer in the upper Hudson Valley and the first in my family to own farm land. I am also a small manufacturer of added value food products - processing over 80,000 pounds of local produce and we are on track to doubling this amount by 2027. And above all else, I am a family man. I am a husband and a father of two young boys. This last point is integral to my testimony; because families are the heart of what I and countless New Yorkers are striving for this legislative session.

We need our state legislature to pass the New York for All act. NY farm families across the state need our legislature to consider the budgetary and constitutional implications of the state of New York using state funds and taxpayers dollars, to pursue and or support both the passive and direct collusion of NY state agencies, including our local law enforcement, with the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Custom Enforcement agents and their Federal immigration mandate.

As I speak, Federal Agents are: using flock data gathered by NY State Department of Motor Vehicles, collaborating with State troopers at traffic check points, signing 287g agreements between local sheriffs and police departments across 13 Counties, and actively planning to increase these numbers, using local resources to employ detainees through our county jails for minor infractions, are deputizing local sheriff and police departments to assist in the enforcement of illegal detentions and deportations of working class people, without criminal records, and on the basis of racial and occupational profiling. All this is taking place throughout our state - using NY State dollars. The despicable irony, just looking at the data from 2022, is that over \$3 billion in New York tax revenue alone was contributed by undocumented workers.

At the New York Farm Bureau we believe that:

“Individual freedom and opportunity must not be sacrificed in a quest for guaranteed “security.” ”

“We believe that legislation and regulatory policy should prioritize the self-employed farmers and businesses that are critical to our state’s economy.”

“According to the USDA 2022 Ag Census, there were 30,650 farms in New York State and 6,502,286 acres in production. New York farms employ 56,678 people. All sectors of agriculture, including processing, are responsible for nearly 200,000 jobs in New York State.”

And based on data provided by NY’s Alianza Agricola, we know that half of the people working NY Farms and Farm businesses are immigrant farm workers.

And for this reason at our most recent New York Farm Bureau State convention, as part of our 2026 policy platform, delegates voted in favor of:

“Protecting our state’s immigrant workforce from arrest and detention without due process.”

“Allowing immigrant workers to access emergency services without fear of arrest by federal immigration authorities.”

And the other policy statements proposed, integral to the verbiage and function of NY for All act, were debated, and yes, narrowly defeated by less than a 10% vote margin - in a hall of 120 delegates. New York Farm Bureau members believe in their fellow immigrant farmers. We know that times are changing in such a way, that healthy democratic debate and deliberation is occurring in the moderate, progressive, liberal and conservative corners of our organization.

At the New York Farm Bureau we advocate for the preservation of our way of life, by supporting the families and businesses that keep farms and farm businesses running.

I am the son of immigrants who knows the bitter sweet truth of what it means for parents to strive for a way of life and the success of your family, on land, in a business and in an America that is not yet your own - by birth right.

As a first generation US citizen, I know first hand the sacrifices my parents made for me, how they contributed to the life that the NY Farm Bureau is trying to preserve and the cost, pain and intergenerational trauma of having a parent taken from you through unjust immigration policies.

I am sure you will read written testimony from farm workers across our state and representation by organizations such as Alianza Agricola and Workers' Center of Central New York. Yet, I wanted you to look into the face of a child of immigrants and share with you the perspectives of the fathers and mothers of those who cannot risk being here today. I want you to know about the daily distraction that pulls at the heart of New Yorkers, haunted by the ever present possibility of being torn away from their family and a life - built on dedicated love and hard work.

In the early morning hours, before sunrise, farmers are called to work in the fields, in greenhouses, in dairies, on the kill floors of slaughterhouses and medium to large scale agricultural factories and facilities. Both winter and the promise of spring, calls us out of bed with the promise of purpose, the promise of work, and the promise of bettering the conditions by which to raise families and children in New York.

FOR PEOPLE dedicated to working farms and agricultural businesses, regardless of immigration status, ethnicity or nationality, we share a universal truth. The challenges and rewards of working with soil, plant and animal, provide us with purpose and dignity. It's this universal truth that drives the work, and the meat, and the milk, and the eggs and the produce to YOUR dinner table - nourishing families across this state. It's that same grit, dignity and respect that drives the wisdom, experience and technical labor that runs the agricultural industry of New York.

Yet, for many, there is a stark difference and additional weight that is carried in those early hours. For many *undocumented people* from Latino America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and South East Asia, there is a nagging distraction in the darkness of those early morning chores. In the quiet moments before the alarms, before the birds or the first cries of new born calves, there is a persistent disquiet that stays with you like a drenched Carhartt in the winter cold. The anxiety soaks into the bones and you can't shake it off. So, you bring this heavy load back with you into the home and you wear it, in front of your children, like a coat of uncertainty that darkens your hopes for spring and the prospects of your purpose - the prospects of your family's future.

Many New Yorkers wake up to the possibility that today will be the day that Immigration Custom Enforcement with the aid of their local sheriff will harvest them. That some local cop or state trooper will work with ICE or other federal agencies to reap and deport our American dreams. Yes, there is a job to do prepping the land and getting seed starts ready. There are trucks to be met and supplies to be processed, purchase orders to be filled, yet all of this relentless responsibility is further weighed down by a heavy truth.

Immigrants choke down a cup of anxiety and uncertainty before most people greet the day with their first cup of coffee. We serve up the eggs and warm up the toast necessary to usher our children to school. We make sure book bags are full and lunch is packed. Immigrants go through these loving motions, and with all the courage in the world, they step out into uncertainty, load their kids onto the school bus and head back to work. They do so knowing very well that this could be their last meal together, that there may be no one to collect the children from the bus stop at the end of the day. No one to tuck their kids goodnight.

As farm owners and other working class citizens worry about their employees showing up for work and the ever increasing cost of doing business in New York, the growing price of eggs and milk, affordable housing and the quality of air and water - tax paying immigrant families share similar concerns. Yet, at the forefront of their worries is a daily grappling with our country's Constitutional Crisis. The daily degradation of their Civil Liberties. The daily stress of illegal searches and seizures. The stress of seeking medical attention after being damaged or trampled by a wayward cow or lacerated on the company floor. The daily stress of being disappeared while resolving a fixit ticket or driving home from work after a 75 hour work week.

Every day a person is illegally detained and deported under these conditions, by ICE agents or in collusion with State agencies and local authorities, is a litmus test of how far the federal administration can fray the Civil Liberties and degrade the Constitutional Rights for all New Yorkers.

Furthermore, the NY State legislature is facing a litmus test. As the ground swell of support continues to grow from our small businesses, our unions and our farmers, in the Valley, Upstate, and Down State, our leadership's metal will be tested, to secure our New York State Budget, for New York State priorities. You, as our elected officials, will be asked to champion and defend our state budget, from federal over reach. You as Senators and Assembly Members will be asked to champion and pass the New York for All Act during this legislative session, to prevent further use of our state funds for federal mandates and the unconscionable acts against the constitutional rights of all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.