

Register-Star

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Farmers assail proposed 40-hour work week

Child care under scrutiny



By Kate Lisa

Johnson Newspaper Corp.

ALBANY — Hundreds of letters were hand-delivered Wednesday to the Executive Chamber to Gov. Kathy Hochul's office from anxious farmers and farm laborers pleading against the state Wage Board's pending decision to lower the agricultural overtime threshold to 40 hours.

The Wage Board must vote by Dec. 15, or within the next two weeks, to lower the current 60-hour threshold standards.

Carlos Lopez, who works on a farm in the state, was one of hundreds of workers to write a letter to the governor to request the 60-hour agricultural work week remain intact.

"It gives us the opportunity to work longer and thus produce more money for our family here and our family at home apart from the farm," Lopez wrote.

Lopez's letter was one of several letters written to the governor in Spanish.

About 400 additional farm workers sent Hochul a letter by email to discourage lowering the threshold.

Farmers and assembly members rallied at the Million Dollar Staircase in the state Capitol on Wednesday before delivering the letters, urging the Wage Board to reject the lower threshold they say would be financially detrimental to the industry.

"You don't see any other business that has a 40-hour threshold giving people more than 37 hours, so that's what we're facing here," said New York Farm Bureau Board of

By Ted Remsnyder

Columbia-Greene Media

HUDSON — State Sen. Michelle Hinchey, R-Saugerties, visited Columbia County on Wednesday accompanied by an influential colleague from New York City to discuss the ongoing issues the county has with providing affordable, reliable child care.

Hinchey and state Sen. Jabari Brisport, D-Brooklyn, who chairs the Senate's Committee on Children and Families, arrived at a Hudson strip mall to hear from child care providers and local officials at the Child Care Connections day care facility.

Brisport spent the day with Hinchey touring the state, including a child care site in Tannersville, as his committee prepares to introduce a child care bill in the upcoming legislative session.

"We were in Columbia County and we were hearing from Columbia County providers but we were also hearing from Greene and Ulster County providers, which are two counties that I represent," Hinchey said on Thursday morning. "It was meant to be a broad conversation, specifically about upstate child care. The senator who chairs the Committee on Children and Families represents Brooklyn, and while we heard many of the same challenges that child care providers face across the state, our challenges are different in more rural communities. Whether that means providing services on a literal mountaintop or the general nature of distance to get to child care providers. There are so many challenges, so it's really important for me as the senator

See FARMERS A2

See CARE A2

KATE LISA/JOHNSON NEWSPAPER CORP.
New York Farm Bureau Board of Directors Vice President Eric Ooms, who owns Ooms Farms in Kinderhook, Columbia County, speaks against the proposed 40-hour work week for farmers in front of the Million Dollar Staircase in the state Capitol on Wednesday.

KATE LISA/JOHNSON NEWSPAPER CORP.
Assemblymember Billy Jones, D-Plattsburgh, rallied Wednesday with farmers in the state Capitol against the Wage Board's pending decision to lower farmers' overtime threshold to 40 hours.



Legislation would aid vets, first responders, with PTSD

KATE LISA/JOHNSON NEWSPAPER CORP.

Christopher Dick, a lifemember of the East Greenbush Fire Department, became emotional during a forum at the American Legion Melvin Roads Post 1231 in Rensselaer on Wednesday recalling his struggles with PTSD and getting mental health treatment as an emergency responder.



By Kate Lisa

Johnson Newspaper Corp.

Christopher Dick was at home enjoying a weekend evening cocktail with his wife when 35 years of buildup of emotion from responding to emergency incidents unraveled.

Dick, a lifetime member of the East Greenbush Fire Department, was diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder two years ago.

"I absolutely lost it," he said. "Thirty-five years of emergency services — fire service, ambulance — literally came flooding out in an hour-and-a-half. It was extremely

difficult for me.

"Those that are in emergency services, fire service, we've always held it within us that we are the tough guys," Dick continued. "We are the ones that are out there to help someone. We hold it within us and there's a point where you just can't hold it anymore."

Dick did not have suicidal thoughts, as is common for veterans and emergency personnel suffering from PTSD, but was at a loss about how to get help.

The fire department Board of Commissioners told Dick the department's insurance did not cover any type of mental health or PTSD

treatment. He was forced to use his own personal time and medical insurance.

"I had to take time off — I had many doctor's appointments," the lifetime emergency volunteer recalled, adding he took off at least six weeks, at first.

"My employer wanted to know what was wrong with me and I couldn't explain it to them," Dick said. "Fortunately, I've gotten to the point now where it's a lot better. I do have days, I do have moments."

Dick is not alone. He is one of thousands of first responders in the

See PTSD A2

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WEATHER page A2

TODAY	TONIGHT	SAT
Breezy and colder	Patchy clouds	A few morning flurries
HIGH	LOW	41
39	25	26

SPORTS



Catskill over Hudson
Catskill's Janay Brantley eyes the basket
PAGE B1

THE SCENE



Royalty served
Kristen Stewart stars as Princess Di in "Spencer" at the Crandell
PAGE A7

INDEX

Region A3
Opinion A4
State/Nation A5
Obituaries A5
Local A10
Sports B1
Classified B4-B5
Comics/Advice B9-B10

On the web
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