

## Early Draft Would Have Banned Many Youth From Working on Family Farms

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, today applauded the U.S. Department of Labor's move to go back to the drawing board on a controversial farm labor rule that would have prevented many young people from working on family farms. After the Department first proposed the new rule, Senator Stabenow encouraged the Department to reconsider and solicit public input before making any new changes to the "parental exemption" of its rule related to child labor in agriculture. Today the Department agreed with Senator Stabenow, stopping its plans to implement the new rules and agreeing to open a new dialogue with family farmers on the issue.

"I grew up in Clare, was active in 4-H, and know how important family farms are in Michigan," Chairwoman Stabenow said. "I am glad the Department of Labor heard my concerns and the concerns of so many families in Michigan and decided to re-evaluate this rule. I was concerned when I learned about the proposed rules and urged the Department to have more conversations with farm families and listen to views before making any new rules. Of course there should be safeguards to protect children from dangerous situations, but there needs to be an understanding that many children in rural communities learn about safety by helping their family on the farm."

Chairwoman Stabenow urged the Labor Department, in a letter to Secretary Hilda Solis in October, to take more time listening to comments from families across the country who would be impacted by the proposed rule changes. Sen. Stabenow argued that prohibiting youth from working on family farms could have far-reaching effects on youth education programs like 4-H, family farms and rural communities. Following Sen. Stabenow's request, and strong opposition from family farmers, the Department of Labor will now seek public comments before re-drafting the rule. According to the Department, a new "parental exemption" rule is expected to be proposed this summer.

According to the Department of Labor, the parental exemption allows children of any age who are employed by their parent, or a person standing in the place of a parent, to perform any job on a farm owned or operated by their parent or such person standing in the place of a parent. Congress created the parental exemption in 1966 when it expanded protections for children employed in agriculture and prohibited their employment in jobs the Department of Labor declared particularly hazardous for children under the age of 16 to perform.

More information can be found on the Department of Labor's website at <http://www.dol.gov> (<http://www.dol.gov/>).



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