Hello, my name is Antonio, I’ve worked in New York for six years at a dairy and I’ve also worked at an apple farm. I’ve worked with tractors, cut trees, fed and milked cows and taken care of calves.

We farmworkers work so many hours for New York’s farms. We produce food and milk products in great quantity. I want to raise my voice today to stand up for my fellow farmworkers, so that all of New York becomes more conscious of the unjust conditions we work in.

I have worked more than 90 to 95 hours per week. We often work at least 12 hours a day. There’s no overtime, and sometimes farm owners don’t even pay minimum wage as they are supposed to.

After 12 hours of extreme work all you want to do is go home and sleep. But you are housed in deplorable conditions, sometimes with no heating in upstate New York winters, and you cannot even sleep.

I have to work because my family is counting on me. And we are helpless to improve conditions. If you complain to the farm owner, he will just tell you, “If you don’t like it here, go somewhere else.”

Many farmworkers do not know their rights – the owners do not tell workers about their rights.

One of my worst experiences was when I unfortunately had an accident on the job. I fell from a machine that I was working on, and I told the owner the pain in my back was so extreme I needed to go to the hospital. The owner said he didn’t have time and ignored me. No one told me about workers compensation or called an ambulance. The next day I could not get up out of bed.

Only 30 hours after my accident did the owner’s wife take me to the hospital. There was no interpreter there. So she filled out my paperwork how she wanted to, in a way making it difficult for me to get worker’s compensation.

Farm owners take advantage of us in all the ways that they can, so they do not want us to know our rights.

I dare to raise my voice today because this is how I can help improve things for other farmworkers. So that the leaders of New York do something to make the injustices stop, because we are not animals. We are human beings, and we need dignity and respect.

Thank you.