

Dear Co-Chair Courtney,

Farms must have protection from opportunistic covid lawsuits

My name is Robin Froerer-Myers. We have a multigenerational farm in eastern Oregon. We are working very hard to keep our employees and our selves safe from the covid virus, We have taken many steps and measures to help prevent the spread of this terrible virus. We have hired new employees to clean and sanitize all working areas several times a day, working areas, vehicles, bathrooms etc. We have hand sanitizer available when ever we can get it, have mask for them to wear. and educate them in hand washing and other precautions they can take. We need you to help all farmers be protected from lawsuits that can demolish a business, In the last 3 months, Oregon's farms have been put in an impossible situation - agriculture is critical infrastructure, necessary to keeping Oregon's food supply stable during the pandemic. But as the science around COVID-19 has developed in unpredictable ways, so have the practices and rules for maintaining a safe workplace. At times, these rules have been conflicting and confusing, which has left Oregon's farms ranches at risk for opportunistic lawsuits - we need the legislature to step in!

Even if a farm or ranch is following all state and federal health guidelines and new OR-OSHA rules, an employee or customer can still contract COVID-19 off-site. There is simply no way to prevent COVID-19 from entering the workplace, especially as Oregon continues to reopen. We are very concerned about lawsuits seeking damages from the operation for circumstances outside of the farm's control.

One lawsuit or demand letter could devastate a family farm, regardless of the steps the farm took to protect employee health. We need to know that if farms are implementing guidance and rules from public health and safety officials, they will be protected from unfair lawsuits that will drain cash reserves.

We need your help - please act today to please pass temporary and targeted liability protections for farms that are doing everything they can to protect employees from COVID-19 and produce the food we all need!

Sincerely,

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