

Date: Feb 19, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Workforce Housing

From: Michael S. McCarthy PhD, Regional Director of the Oregon Farm Bureau for Sherman, Wasco and Hood River Counties and Hood River County Farmer, Pears, Apples, Cherries, Hay, Cattle and timber.

Re: Farm Worker Housing Tax Credit and Farm Worker Housing Maintenance and Operation Credit

Farmers provide housing to their employees free of charge in many agricultural sectors in Oregon. Yet farmers receive no credit against the required minimum wage. Other sectors of the economy do not provide housing yet pay the same minimum wage.

The principal reason that we provide housing is that there is not housing available or affordable in the area. In Hood River County like many counties tourism competes for housing, reducing supply and driving up rental rates. Housing we provide with utilities paid has a market value in Hood River County in the range of from \$1000-\$2000 per month depending on house size and family size. For a 160 hour month this is a value to our employees of from \$6.25 to \$12.50 per hour on top of their regular wages which are above minimum wage.

To recognize this benefit provided to workers we ask that the Housing Tax Credit be continued and an additional Credit be given to farmers for Maintenance and Operation. We have three to four OSHA inspections per year on our farm which ensures that our housing is fully compliant. Plus it is our personal goal to retain a reliable and satisfied workforce by providing attractive comfortable housing.

We appreciate your efforts to help us provide and maintain facilities for our workers.