

Jefferson County Farm Bureau  
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March 7, 2021

House Committee on Business and Labor

900 Court St., NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

Oppose HB 2358

Dear Chair Holvey and Committee Members,

HB bill 2358 will be very damaging to the integrity of farming and the EFU zone in Jefferson County. This bill will destroy the strong support that our farm bureau has always had to protect the EFU zone for agriculture. We fear that the last crop that we will see planted will be housing developments. The reason that the EFU zone exists is to protect agriculture and recognize that farmers are a unique specialized industry in our own right. That is also the reason that there has been a federal exemption for over 70 years in place on overtime for the agricultural industry.

- Crops compete not just within the USA but internationally (we raise 70% of the USA carrot seed and 50% of the world carrot seed). We already compete in a world market with one of the highest hourly wages in agriculture.

- The Jefferson County farmers are reliant on a scarce off farm water source. That water is expensive and comes via a canal to us 24 hours a day, and to implement water savings, workers must be on the farm at all times of day to change and move the water for the crop needs. Seedlings and some crops need frequent water changes, just not eight hours in a twenty-four-hour period.

- Raising any crop is like being a new parent. You go from conception to tending the crop until it reaches maturity and is ready for harvest. You don't raise you kids on only an eight-hour time shift.

- Last summer's fires and smoke did untold damage to our crops and bee pollination activity, but that wasn't on an eight-work shift. For over six weeks we dealt with smoke from the fires.

- Covid-19 has added stressful demands on everyone's personal lives, as well as farmers to protect our workers. Implementation of the Covid-19 rules for the protection of our workers was very hard to do since you aren't in a confined area like a widget factory. We want to protect our workers that are loyal and return year to year to help us raise and harvest the crops. If you do not pay them well, they will go to the building trades. The rate of pay is over \$15 an hour now, and it isn't uncommon to pay most of the returning workers bonuses at the end of the harvest.

- If one of us as farmers add an extra shift will the profitability go up, no. In a factory you can just produce more widgets, and pass the cost on to the consumer or restructure their shifts. On a farm you farm when the crop demands your attention and that is not in eight-hour shifts.

- By the grace of God, each farmer hopes for one good crop in each field when in full production and nothing is fallow. Because of the drought that we are experiencing now we are leaving 40% of our irrigated ground fallow.

We encourage you to vote no on HB 2358 and focus on "wildfires and Covid-19" needs to get Oregon back to a functioning State and not destroy an industry that makes up 15% of the Oregon economy and 12% of the jobs. Ag in Oregon is a huge, traded sector with 75-80% of the production going out of state, and of that 40% is bought offshore, bringing new money into Oregon. Oregon needs to heal and become healthy; this bill will not do that.

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Jefferson County Farm Bureau

Home of North Unit Irrigation District