

Esteemed Business and Labor Committee Members,

I am writing to oppose to HB2398. Most of us in Oregon like our local Fruits and Vegetables. Many of these items, like asparagus, take significant amounts of labor for short periods of time. Because the labor is only needed for 8-10 weeks and the total number of laborers are dictated by Mother Nature, planning-ahead to minimize hours worked will not be an option.

In asparagus farming the labor for picking and packing makes up over 70% of the cost. Currently, local asparagus sells at farmer's markets and local supermarkets for nearly \$4 per pound. So couldn't the farmer just take the added costs out of her profit, well she could if she didn't average just 7 cents of profit per consumer dollar. Let me put it this way, even if the new law only adds 10% cost to the final product, it still results in a 3% loss to the farmer, if he does not raise the price. If he raises the price, it hurts the people who consume his produce. It is a no-win situation.

How much can working moms and dads be expected to pay for local produce? Does \$5-\$6 per pound seem reasonable for a working family? I don't think it does and the result will be the removal of locally produced fruits and vegetables for many Oregonians. Furthermore, the resulting alternative to locally grown produce will be cheaper imported produce. Produce that is less safe, has a higher carbon footprint, and forces foreign workers to do the same work for less than 5% what they would get paid working on a local Oregon Farm.

If this seems far fetched, you need look no further than California who has cut their asparagus production by more than 95% since that state's ag overtime law was implemented.

I hope you will consider the cost, not just to the farmers, but also to consumers, the environment, and the foreign laborers who will be forced to do this work for pennies on the dollar.

Sincerely,  
Shay Myers