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8 March 2021

To: House Committee on Business & Labor

RE: Oregon House Bill 2358, Farmworker Overtime

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Bonham, Vice-Chair Grayber, and Members of the Committee,

Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. We are an organization of over 2,800 health professionals and public health advocates statewide working collaboratively with community partners to educate and advocate for societal and policy change that protects human health at the local, state, national, and international level. We seek a healthy, just, and peaceful world for present and future generations.

We enthusiastically support the passage of House Bill 2358 and encourage you to vote yes on this bill, which would guarantee overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay. House Bill 2358 also takes the comprehensive approach of ensuring overtime benefits for farmworkers regardless of whether they are paid by the hour or by piece-rate (how many crops they produce).

One year ago as the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed our everyday lives, we began celebrating frontline workers who kept communities fed and cared for as we changed our lives to slow the virus's spread. As we have watched the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on frontline workers and their families and communities, it has also become more and more clear that we have a long way to go before essential workers are valued and appreciated with the material support they deserve for their essential work. House Bill 2358 will take an important step in that direction by ensuring that farmworkers receive the overtime benefits which have been available to the majority of other workers since the Federal Labor Standards Act of 1938.

Economic stability is essential in supporting the health and wellbeing of Oregon communities. House Bill 2358 offers an opportunity to improve this social determinant of health by ensuring that farmworkers receive the overtime pay that they deserve in providing essential food security for communities near and far. We know that the majority of farmworkers in

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

The US affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize

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the modern era are immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, and that the majority were Black when the Federal Labor Standards Act passed without including agricultural workers in 1938.¹ Farmworkers are by and large sorely underpaid and most do not have healthcare coverage provided through their employers. This bill therefore will take an important step towards racial and economic justice for communities that work incredibly hard amidst unhealthy wildfire smoke, extreme heat and cold, and high ambient air pollution to keep food on our shelves.

We hope that you all will take the opportunity to support this much-needed bill. Let's move closer to properly valuing our essential workers by supporting their health and wellbeing through economic stability. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Damon Motz-Storey, Healthy Climate Program Director
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

¹ Farm Workers and the Fair Labor Standards Act: Racial Discrimination in the New Deal
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2205898

