

Testimony on Mandatory overtime

My name is Matthew Cook, I am a farmer for Cook Family Farms, in Albany. I grow processed vegetables, Grass seed, Hazelnuts, and specialty seed crops.

I am opposed to mandatory ag overtime in the state of Oregon.

If this bill were to pass my farm would be forced to find more automated processes on the farm and find ways to eliminate jobs. We already pay over minimum wage on our farm just so we can attract employees to come for us as there are very few workers who are willing to work in the agriculture sector. In order to accommodate mandatory overtime, we would have to decrease the rate of pay for every employee, decrease the number of hours each of my employees would have, and try and find more employees to replace the already skilled employees' hours, which it is very difficult to even find workers as it is.

The nature of farming does not allow us, like most other businesses, to increase our sales prices to compensate for higher costs. We are at the mercy of what the market is willing to pay for our products. This puts us at a huge disadvantage as a small business. Our profit margins are already so slim, we will be unable to absorb the increased costs of employment and could very likely lead to our farm ceasing operations.

Many of our seasonal worker rely on the extra hours they can accumulate in the summer and this motivates them to come back each year and work for us. With us having to decrease the number of hours each employee gets to 40 hours, this will deter them from coming back to our farm and we will not have people to help harvest the crops.

My farm is working very hard to reduce our carbon footprint, use less pesticides through organic practices, protect our waterways, and other such environmental and socially sustainable practices. Unfortunately, all these practices cost us more money. If more money goes to paying employee's overtime, it will hurt the employee's wages, hurt the environment, hurt our society, and our food security will be at risk.

Please don't allow this bill to move forward.

Thank you
Matthew Cook
V.P. Cook Family Farms Inc.