

March 8, 2021

My name is Stewart Kircher and I am an organic dairy farmer in Dayton. We are a family farm that has been in operation since the early 1980's. We employ roughly fifty people year round, some of which have been working at the dairy for over thirty years, all the way down to high school students doing work study programs, and college students working part time. We enjoy creating opportunities for anybody wanting to pursue a career in agriculture.

We are committed to treating our employees fairly, caring for our animals, the land, the environment, and creating a place where people enjoy coming to work everyday. A sudden change in our labor costs and laws could be detrimental to our employees and our farms.

Dairy farming is a unique industry in that we spend 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year caring for our livestock. This a consistent work load everyday, no matter what time of year, what the weather is, or what challenges you may face to get the jobs done. We also grow almost all of our own feed for our animals, creating an added seasonal work load and need for extra seasonal staff to harvest our crops during the short time window we are typically allowed with the Pacific Northwest climate.

We provide the best opportunities and benefits possible for our employees. Including, excellent wages, permanent housing, vehicles, fuel, health insurance, vacation, sick leave, flexibility for family care and so much more. We have done multiple high school apprentice programs, funded higher education programs for employees extended learning, and even paid for full college tuitions.

Given the challenges of the past year, and lack of dialogue regarding overtime laws, we strongly feel that making a rushed decision during this legislative session would be unwise and likely omit important considerations.

We strongly oppose House Bill 2358. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stewart Kircher