

House Business and Labor Committee,

I'm submitting this testimony to express my standing on HB 2358.

I've been an Oregon resident for less than 2 years (previously a Washington resident for 18 years). I attended Oregon State University and Graduated with a degree in Crops and Soil Sciences in 2019. Unlike my family, I had the privilege to pursue a higher education and a career of my liking. We come from a labor intensive background, my entire family has performed farm labor their entire life's in the state of Washington, whether its by piece rate or at an hourly rate. The difference between Washington and Oregon is the amount of Labor Contractors that exist. I believe they are often overlooked and not accounted for when talking about a farm workers income.

I chose to remain neutral on HB 2358 because I strongly believe that Farm Owners and Agriculture companies pay sufficient money for the labor that is performed by farm workers, but I also believe that Labor Contractors need to be held accountable for the percentage of money that they keep away from a farm worker. I've worked with several Ag companies here in the Willamette Valley where I was always required to call in a Labor Contractor whenever I needed work performed in one of our seed production fields and I've always thought that Labor Contractors were an unfair business for any farm worker. How do you justify a Farm owner paying anywhere from \$18 to \$25 or more an hour for 1 individual for the Labor Contractor to come in and take those same \$18-\$25 and paying that same individual \$13 for that same hour of labor that was performed? Simply unfair in my opinion, would we even be talking about farm labor overtime if farm workers made \$18-\$25/hour at the bare minimum instead of \$13/hour? You multiply these earning by 50-200 individuals and 8-12 hours a day and you start to realize why everyone in the Valley wants to start a Labor Contracting business. I strongly believe Labor Contractors are part of this issue, if you even want to call it an issue to begin with and this topic needs to be revised and linked to overtime for farm workers.

I also believe there needs to be better research on claims being made by activists and organizations who claim that farm workers only make \$15,000 - \$17,499. No time frame is stated, that amount of money can be earned during the busy season which can go anywhere from 1-3 months or longer and making \$15,000 - \$17,499 in that time frame is more than sufficient to live a comfortable life. But I'm also well aware that there are farm worker that struggle and live paycheck to paycheck.

I hope my testimony has helped in the viewing and hearing of HB 2358 and I hope further research is conducted before coming to an agreement. Agriculture is drastically important in our country and it needs to remain sustainable while being able to provide a comfortable living wage for our farm workers.

-Eduardo Salas