

Ackerman Orchards, Inc.

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House Committee on Business and Labor
HB 2358 Meeting 3:15 pm 3/8/2021

To whom it may concern:

My family has operated a small 60 acre pear orchard in the Hood River valley since 1903. We seasonally employ about 50 workers doing short term jobs such as pruning and thinning, and harvesting. We also have 2 full-time, year round employees who take care of the day to day maintenance.

Most all of our employees work an 8 hour day, five days a week. In order to attract workers, despite the unskilled nature of the work, we typically pay more than the minimum wage. Because of this, I have many seasonal employees who want to work 9 hours a day and 6 days a week, to maximize their earnings over the short term work. They know that once each particular job is finished they will have to find employment at another orchard in the valley.

I never ask them to work more than 40 hours a week, nor do I discourage them if they want to work more. They are hard working people and come back every season, year after year. In many cases we have several generations of families that make part of their annual wages helping take care of our orchard and harvest the fruit.

HB 2358 would severely damage both the earnings of my employees as well as the financial health of our business. We operate on a thin margin, and our biggest expense is labor. The cost of labor in agriculture has risen far faster than the price of our pears. To require time and a half for overtime would do the opposite what the sponsors of this bill intended. Farmers can't afford it, and won't pay it. I know we won't.

There are few jobs in our orchard that need to be done in a hurry, and none that require overtime. The net result will be to hurt the workers who want to work more and will no longer be allowed to. This bill may be well intentioned, but will be a disaster for everyone concerned.

Sincerely yours,

George Ackerman

President