

March 9, 2021

To: Chair Holvey and Committee Members.

RE: HB2358

My name is David Henze, and I am the President of Coleman Agriculture. We grow hops, grass seed, hazelnuts, beans, pumpkins, hemp, cauliflower, and garlic seed.

I listened to testimony yesterday and I felt that I need to submit my written testimony to this bill. While I oppose it as it stands, I propose that more work is done before it goes to the floor. Possibly a better outcome could take place if more thought and effort is put into it.

I would like to cover three areas.

1. Farmers in Oregon value our workers and work hard for their welfare
2. The bill, as proposed, will probably hurt farmworkers, financially
3. The bill, as proposed, will hurt Oregon agriculture and small farmers

Some of the testimony yesterday characterized farm workers as you would picture them in movies. I believe more research would show that farm work has improved significantly since the 1940s. We offer bonuses, paid time off, employer subsidized healthcare, 401K with matching, life and disability insurance, and in some cases vehicles, loans and housing. We have employees that have worked for us for over 25 years. We work to help the next generation and see our employees send kids to college. We work to assure that we have the highest level of attention to safety and worker welfare.

The testimony yesterday painted a picture of low wages. Our employees that have been with us for multiple years earn higher than minimum wage. An example of this would be an employee that earned close to \$50,000 a year with an additional \$2,500 bonus. With this bill, his hours will be reduced and, if working 40 hours per week, his gross earnings would result in a loss of over \$13,000 per year. This bill could hurt employees financially. I would invite you to come to our farm and talk to the employees. You can ask them if they want overtime if their hours are limited.

As mentioned in Testimony, California, Washington and Minnesota rescinded the overtime exemption. Oregon seeks to join those three. It still seems that 46 other states have not done so and there is a reason. Idaho will benefit from this bill as crop acreage will be moved to a lower cost areas. This is simple economics. Idaho has already outpaced Oregon in Hop production. Coleman Agriculture is a professionally managed large farming operation. We can manage. However, the smaller farms will not be able to adapt. The alternative is to sell off land. I believe the Oregon State Department of Ag has an initiative to slow the selloff of agricultural land. This bill will only accelerate that trend.

While I encourage a "no" vote to this bill, I would ask that more research be done before the bill is brought to the floor. Perhaps there is an outcome that would benefit the farmworkers and work to nature of farming. This is a serious subject with serious consequences. A good place to start would be to study the impact of labor on the Dairy industry in California and the subsequent growth of Dairy in Idaho. Thank you for considering my testimony