

I am a first generation American. I was raised in a community of humble, but hard-working people. As we grow older, and so do our parents, we realize how much of themselves physically, spiritually, and mentally, they have given to this land and to the betterment of our futures. They never asked for much. Their humble wages were enough to pay for our basic needs, and that has always been enough for them. Americans love to talk about their patriotism, but if you ask me, our farm worker parents are the ones who showed it. Some might argue that it's because they didn't have a choice. Many of them don't. Which is why this bill must pass. Oregon has exploited our hardworking farmers (yes they are farmers because their hands are the hands that cultivate the land that provides us with the food on our tables) long enough. They don't have access to any kind of health insurance private or public. Most cannot file for a tax return despite the fact that they do pay taxes like the rest of us. Their wages are extremely low. They do not have the means to save up for emergency or long-term health care. The bare minimum that we can do for the people that keep our economy turning, that have risked their lives for us during extreme conditions, is to protect them from unhealthy working conditions. It is no surprise that inhaling smoke from fires is extremely harmful when exposed for long periods of time. The general public is advised to stay indoors and buy expensive filters for their own well-being. So, why are we turning a blind eye to the well-being of our field workers? Are they not considered people? Are they not our neighbors and friends? Are they not the only reason this state and country didn't starve this past year and under every risky condition ever thrown at them? It's time for change. We must do better as Oregonians. I urge you to please pass this bill. It's the very least we can do.