

My name is Paul Skeen, and I farm in Nyssa, Malheur County, OR. I am also the President of Malheur County Onion Growers Assn. All I do in my role as President is play defense against bills that harm agriculture in Eastern Oregon. Our county is the largest onion growing county in the United States. I raise 8 different crops on about 1400 acres and employ 28 people throughout my season. HB2358 would be the most aggressive overtime policy in the country, which will be devastating for local farmers and our employees, who are already struggling financially. As a farmer, I cannot simply increase the price of my crops to account for added labor costs. Consumers set our prices and will buy from other states or countries that sell at a cheaper price. I will have to absorb the added overhead. Oregon already has one of the highest minimum wages in the nation, and I do not have one employee that is only earning minimum wage. We are already paying more than most of our competition. To stay in business, I will be forced to limit the number of hours worked by our employees to 40 hours to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. I do not want to do this, and our employees do not want me to be forced into doing this. My employees are loyal, hardworking and have been with me for a long time. They can live a good life with the hours they can work here at the wages they are paid. We will be forced to mechanize operations, transition to less labor-intensive crops, and even downsize to stay in business. I will be forced to let good employees go. HB2358 will demand wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and hours for farm employees. As a family business we cannot operate at a loss year-over-year, so we must control costs that seem to increase every year in Oregon. Not only are you trying to hit us with this bill, but you are now also trying put a tax on off road diesel and off-road tires which will add additional expense to every piece of farm equipment we own. You also have discussed adding a carbon tax. How much more do you think we can take! I can see Idaho from my office window, and I would give anything if my farm were in that agriculture friendly state that cares about their farmers and where their food is going to come from. I would be thrilled if someone in Salem would propose a bill that allow our Treasure Valley of Oregon to be annexed into the Treasure Valley of Idaho. Please oppose HB2358 this session. This bill will negatively impact family farmers and ranchers, but also our wonderful agricultural workers.