

OrCAN
Oregon Climate & Agriculture Network

March 26, 2021

Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and Members of the House Business and Labor Committee,

On behalf of Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network (OrCAN), I am writing in support of HB 2358. This bill will guarantee long overdue overtime pay to agricultural workers and ends the racist exclusion of farmworkers from the Federal Labor Standards Act in Oregon.

OrCAN works to build a regenerative agricultural economy that is focused on advancing farm-based solutions for climate resilience that works for a farmer's bottom-line and that is rooted in community. Farm workers are essential to the success of Oregon agriculture and on the frontlines of climate related disasters including wildfires, extreme heat and more recently, a winter storm.

According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey, individual farm workers earn \$15,000 to \$17,499 a year and families are estimated to make between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year. Their work is place-based and time-bound (due to crop harvest windows), which puts them at higher risk of adverse health effects from climate-related illnesses such as prolonged exposure to extreme heat and wildfire smoke. As we have witnessed, wildfires happen most often during the peak of harvest season in late summer when workers have the opportunity to earn the most money. By denying workers basic workplace rights, such as overtime pay, workers will be forced to choose between their health and putting food on their families' table.

By saying that this will disadvantage workers, we are veering away from what the root problem really is. This is about racial justice and about affording farmworkers self-determination and equal rights. The racist legacy of excluding agricultural workers from overtime pay in the Federal Labor Standards Act was implemented to maintain social and economic control of workers. Now that we understand these intentions, it is our responsibility to reverse the divisive and suppressive damage that it has caused.

Until we are able to fully recognize farmworkers as essential workers by making overtime mandatory for this sector, we will not be able to achieve a truly resilient food and farming system in Oregon. According to OHA, there are an estimated 174,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and related family members, that contribute to Oregon's multi-billion dollar agricultural industry. As a result, it is our duty as fellow Oregonians to ensure that they receive equal opportunity for a safe and fairly compensated workplace.

Thank you for your consideration to vote yes on HB 2358 that ensures farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor.

Sincerely,



Dominica Navarro
Oregon Climate and Agriculture Network
Administrative Coordinator