

March 29, 2021

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

My name is Caitlin Seyfried, and I am the Programs Manager at North Coast Food Web. We are a non-profit located in Astoria working with farms and food businesses on the Oregon North Coast to support their financial success and our community's access to good food. We believe deeply that food can and should be produced in a way that is ethical for all laborers. Farmworkers, often experts and professionals in their work, and as majority people of color, have been undervalued and dehumanized by racist policies, and we want to see that trend reversed in Oregon. As such, I am writing in support of HB 2358, farmworker overtime.

Farmworkers as essential workers and as a job sector that is majority people of color (historically being majority Black and presently immigrants from Latin America/the Carribean) should not be excluded from fair pay under the Federal Labor Standards Act. HB 2358 guarantees overtime pay to agricultural workers after 40 hours in a workweek at one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay. This includes farmworkers who are paid by piece-rate (how many crops they produce) or hourly. By passing HB 2358, Oregon would join five other states (California, Washington, New York, Minnesota, Hawaii) with some form of overtime pay for agricultural workers. This legislation would end the racist exclusion of farmworkers from the Federal Labor Standards Act.

The North Coast Food Web believes that farmworkers should be respected, and that the discriminatory treatment of farmworkers is a direct result of racism to maintain economic control. There is no valid justification for excluding farmworkers from receiving overtime pay. In a good year, farmworkers deal with hazardous conditions and exploitation. Agricultural workers deserve overtime pay:

- This past year, farmworkers have inhaled dangerous smoky air from fires, labored during COVID-19 without proper PPE or protections when they get sick, and worked through winter storms.
- Farmworkers are underpaid and exploited for their cheap labor. 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Farm Worker Ministry: Low Wages <http://nfwm.org/farm-workers/farm-worker-issues/low-wages/>

- Farmwork is place-based and time-bound due to crop harvest windows, which means during peak harvesting season when workers can earn the most money, they may be forced to choose between their health and putting food on their families' table.<sup>2</sup>
- Most farmworkers and their families do not have healthcare coverage through their employer. As a result, migrant and seasonal farmworkers experience higher rates of specific health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer than most other Oregonians.

HB 2358 will recognize farmworkers as laborers and as essential workers deserving of overtime pay. 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.<sup>3</sup> Overtime pay will contribute to economic stability in a class of workers who have been excluded from basic labor standards such as minimum wage, collective bargaining rights, and OT pay. With better wages, there will be an increase in consumer spending, especially in local businesses and rural communities.

I urge you to vote yes on HB 2358 to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor.

Sincerely,

*Caitlin Seyfried*  
*Programs Manager*  
*North Coast Food Web*

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<sup>2</sup> OHA, Climate and Health in Oregon 2020 Report, 21.

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Documents/2020/Climate%20and%20Health%20in%20Oregon%202020%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> OHA, Vital Role of Migrants in the State Economy.

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/HP-PCO/Pages/Migrant-Health.aspx#:~:text=An%20estimated%20174%2C000%20migrant%20and,multi%2Dbillion%20dollar%20agricultural%20industry.>