

My name is George Meyer and I farm in Marion and Linn counties. The main things on our farm we grow are grass seed, hazelnuts and green beans for processing. I have been farming for 42 years and employ 9 employees during the peak harvest. I would like to share some concerns I have with HB 2358 on both my farm and my employees, which is scheduled for public hearing in the House of Business and Labor Committee on March 29th.

HB 2358 would require every farm and ranch in Oregon to pay overtime to employees after 40 hours of work, with no exceptions or consideration of peak season. This is the most aggressive overtime policy in the country, which would be devastating for local farmers and our employees.

Agriculture is experiencing a serious workforce shortage, and I already do a lot to compensate my employees for their hard work. Each full time year around employee gets a pickup to drive and a house on one of the farms to live in.

I want to do everything I can to keep my employees happy and coming back to my farm, but as a farmer, I am a price taker. This means that I cannot simply increase the sale 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 any added overhead. That's the economic reality I deal with every day.

I will not be able to afford the added payroll costs proposed in HB 2358, as it will likely cost me \$82,500.00 in new labor costs. To stay in business, I will be forced to limit the number of hours worked by my employees to 40 hours in a week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. I do not want to do this, and my employees do not want me to do this, but that is the practical reality of this bill.

Farmers and ranchers will have to mechanize operations, transition to less labor-intensive crops, or even move outside of Oregon to stay in business. Farm employees are at risk of losing their jobs if downsizing, switching crops, or mechanizing are the only options available to a farm or ranch. If this bill passes, I will need to restructure our farm to stay in business. We will be forced to look at growing different crops and mechanize operations where we can.

The other consequences for my employees will not longer be able to provide free housing or provide a free vehicle for them to drive. Our farm has put a value on those two added bonuses. A pickup to drive on our farm is valued at \$600/month and a house to live in is valued at \$1500/month.

As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year, so we have to control costs that seem to increase every year in Oregon. I know it's not the goal of this bill to reduce employee take-home pay, but HB 2358 demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and hours for farm employees.

I am very concerned that this policy hasn't been well-vetted and will actually harm those it intends to help. Those who want the bill have not even done an analysis of how much this will cost!

The work force in my opinion that will hurt the most if this bill passes will be the migrant workforce that is working for labor contractors. Those are unskilled labors that spot spray off variety grasses and trim our hazelnut orchard. We pay the labor contractor \$18/hr. per employee. If we had to pay over time that would increase their pay to \$27/hr. per employee after the initial 40hrs worked. We can't afford to pay over time on this workforce. Myself, and my full time workers work along side these workers when we have them out on our farm. We have asked questions and got to know their story and why they are working here in Oregon. We met a schoolteacher from Guatemala that was working as many hours as he could to send money back home. Husband and wife that were from the southern part of Mexico again, working as many hours as they could to take the money back home. We don't normally work 6 days a week in the winter but these people begged us.

Please oppose HB 2358 this session. This bill will negatively impact not only family farmers and ranchers in Oregon, but also agricultural workers

Thank you for your vote no on SB 2358.

George Meyer