

Farmworker Overtime
March 29, 2021

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

My name is Jason Skipton, and I am with Growing Gardens. Growing Gardens uses the experience of growing food in schools, backyards and correctional facilities to cultivate healthy, equitable communities. Our work is to ensure that low-income, specifically communities of color have access to healthy and culturally appropriate food right in their backyard and neighborhood. The main pillars of our work are 1) to provide access to healthy food 2) to provide a high quality education that is centered on garden-based and hands-on learning 3) to build and strengthen positive social networks 4) to build leadership opportunities for communities most impacted by institutionalized racism

I am writing in support of HB 2358, farmworker overtime. If our current pandemic has taught us anything it is to support the exact people who are keeping us fed, nourished and with the resources to support our families. We must support them at this time and forever. We can accomplish this first step today with your support of HB 2358.

- 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.
- Oregon would join five other states (California, Washington, New York, Minnesota, Hawaii) with some sort of overtime pay for agricultural workers.
- Ends the racist exclusion of farmworkers from the Federal Labor Standards Act.

As a state we have designated these hard working individuals as essential when it was beneficial for the entire population, why would we not want these people to be compensated for their work to bring food to our tables. Why and maybe a better question to ask is how do we not designate these individuals as essential now? To be clear, we can't. They are essential now and are essential to our future.

Farmworkers are frontline workers who continue to show up despite facing a respiratory pandemic, wildfires, and more recently, a winter storm. Agricultural workers deserve to be paid fairly for their labor. 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.

Would we be ok to do this to another group of our workforce? Would we be ok doing this for nurses, or teachers, or truck drivers? No, we would not. We seem to be ok with this since this population is outside of the public view, working, struggling and sustaining our families with their work. They are as important as nurses, doctors, teachers and engineers. They grow, harvest and bring our food to our homes.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 2358 to ensure farmworkers in Oregon are adequately paid for their labor. The choice is clear, be bold and stand with our farmworkers today.

Sincerely,
Jason Skipton
Executive Director
Growing Gardens
www.growing-gardens.org