

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber, and members of the House Committee on Business and Labor,

Dear members of the committee, my name is Cynthia Ramirez and I am writing in great favor of HB 2358, farm worker overtime. It is time for Oregon to address the racism farm workers face every day in this state.

Farm workers deserve to be paid overtime and be treated equally. Oregon has a long history of racism that farmers like to ignore. They are exploiting minorities and are treating them as disposable. I have heard many stories of farm workers saying their employers care more about their business than they do the health of the farm workers. Is it upsetting to hear how my community is being treated inhumanely.

My mother is a farm worker and I see what working in the fields has done to her physical and mental health. She works from Monday to Friday, and even works on Saturday and Sundays when there is work offered. She goes to work around 5AM every day and returns at around 7:30PM. Since I am working a full time job now, I hardly ever see her. She is never home because she is always working.

I see her come home exhausted, barely able to walk or take a shower. She works year round when there is work. During the rainy season I see her come home in drenched clothes, and in the summer I see her come home sunburned. She worked during the forest fires, and she'd come home covered in ash. It is unfair that my mom has to work like this. She is 48 years old, and can't give up to work because she has dedicated her life to supporting her four children.

Farm workers are not treated equally. They are called essential workers but are treated as disposable. If farmers and ranchers really cared about farm workers as they claim they do, then they would for once take into consideration what farm workers want and what will improve their lives. I've heard countless stories of farm workers in favor of overtime, however they are afraid to speak out because they are afraid of retaliation from the farmers.

Farm workers are the most vulnerable workers, and it hurts to see my community suffering. It hurts to see them talk about how nobody cares about their health or their stories. For once we need to listen to farm worker stories. Excluding farm workers from overtime is racist. Oregon must face its history of racism and listen to people of color.

I urge you all to please read the stories of farm workers and family members of farm workers. We experience first hand the damage of working long hours for many days in the fields does to you. This has always been a racial problem, and to say that it is not is ignoring the history of racism and further proving the point that farmers do not care about their workers.

Thank you for reading my testimony.