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February 7, 2022

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

RE: Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Oppose HB 4002 As Introduced

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Bonham and Grayber and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on House Bill 4002, the proposed agricultural overtime bill. The Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers (CGFG) represent 440 apple, cherry and pear growers in Wasco and Hood River counties, who employ roughly 1,900 workers year-round and nearly 9,400 during peak season. We appreciate the legislature working hard to find an Oregon solution to agricultural overtime, however HB 4002 fails to address the uniqueness of our industry.

Tree fruit growers are price takers. Meaning, our members do not get the luxury of setting the price of our crops. Instead, they compete in the global market and are told the price purchasers are willing to pay. This eliminates a farmer's ability to increase the price of their products in the way other industries can when labor or other cost inputs increase. Leaving them with two options – absorb the cost, which for many family farms means operating in the red year after year or stop farming altogether, laying off agricultural workers in the process.

Tree fruit orchards are also one of the most labor-intensive sectors of the agriculture industry. Correctly pruning and thinning fruit trees is critical to harvesting a healthy crop and the hand-labor workers that perform this work are irreplaceable. Not only because our members value their workers and often employ the same families for generations, but because a machine does not exist that can perform this work. Mechanization is simply not an option.

It is because of these unique characteristics of our industry that we must have an Oregon solution to agricultural overtime. A policy that includes seasonality with peak weeks to allow farmers and farmworkers the flexibility to work extra hours during a narrow set of weeks throughout the year.

As introduced and with the latest round of Committee amendments, HB 4002 phases-in a 40-hour overtime mandate while simultaneously phasing-out tax credits for farmers. A temporary tax credit is simply delaying the inevitable for our members – going out of business.



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We ask that you oppose HB 4002 and work with our growers to craft an Oregon solution to agricultural overtime. One that recognizes the unique seasons of our industry, preserves farmworker jobs, and treats both farmworkers and farmers fairly.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Doke', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mike Doke
Executive Director
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers