

Submitter: Josh Zielinski

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Members of the Committee On Business and Labor,

Thank you for reading my testimony today. I am a 5th generation farmer/nurseryman in Salem, Oregon. I chose to follow the footsteps before me and help run my family's nursery despite the long hours it requires at times because I love what I do. The truth is many of our employees, many of whom have worked for us for over 15 to 20 years, do too. We all know that some days will be shorter and some will be longer. We work in harmony with weather conditions, daylight hours, and crop demands.

I oppose HB4002 with a 40 hour overtime threshold as it will have a negative economic impact on both farming operations and farmworkers. The economic impact on the economy has been outlined in at least one independent study (Highland study). We will be forced to scale back on labor intense crops (including organics, berries, grapes, forests) and more specifically to our business the specialty ornamental nursery crops that Oregon is famous for which has much broader impacts than it may seem: without these items will buyers across the US need what we have to offer?

Perhaps even worse than this is farmworkers will be faced with reduced take home pay as hours will undoubtedly be cut to threshold level the way they are in virtually every industry with 40 hour standard. This is happening now in California and we are seeing first hand: I have hired some of them recently. More farmworkers moving to Oregon because they cannot live the lifestyle they want on 40 hour work weeks. Growers in California that I have spoken with say that many of their employees are working multiple jobs now and facing exhaustion to make ends meet the way they were accustomed to while working typical farm hours in just one job.

The nursery industry, and agriculture in general, competes on a national, if not international, scale where we work hard to maximize quality and yields to sell at market rates. Oregon's ideal growing climate helps tremendously but the costs of doing business here already put us at a competitive disadvantage. It is imperative that if we want to continue to have a strong and diversified agriculture sector in rural Oregon than the voices of those working and living there be heard: there must be compromise!

Please leave out complicated tax credits and take into consideration the proposals by agriculture coalition(s) who understand what it as stake with this bill's passage.

Again, thank you for listening to/reading my testimony today.

Sincerely,
Josh Zielinski
Alpha Nursery