

From: Milka Mendez on behalf of Yolanda (Agricultural Worker from Marion County)
To: House Committee on Business and Labor
Re: Support for Farmworker Overtime

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Milka Mendez, I am here providing testimony in representation of Yolanda who cannot be present. I have authorization to share her story.

I am Yolanda, an agricultural worker. I live in Marion County. I arrived here when I was 23 years old, I spoke very little Spanish as I speak a dialect. Since I arrived here I have worked in the field. I write to you to urge you to support HB 4002, overtime pay for us farmworkers.

My husband and I have worked very hard to give our children what they need but it has been very difficult. For many years we had to live renting only one small room in a house where many people lived because that is all we could afford even though we worked many hours.

We begin working very early and that is why I have always had to wake up my children at 4:30 in the morning and take them to daycare. The mornings are very cold and for me it is very hurtful to see my children not be able to open up their little eyes because they are still sleepy. And they sleep in your car and you have to wake them up again when you get to the daycare. After finishing work we leave in a hurry to be able to pick them up from daycare on time. The majority of daycares close at 5:30. We get home, I give my children a quick bath, we prepare something quick to eat, we have dinner and our children go to sleep because the next day it will be the same.

There is no time to play, to sing with them, it is sad because I do not see them. I have not been able to enjoy my children. I cannot go to school activities due to the work hours that I have. I have to work many hours to pay rent, insurance and bills. I now see my daughters all grown up and I tell them: "I'm sorry, I lost so much time to tend to you, I suffered and you did too, but I had to buy you clothes, shoes and food."

We work many hours per week, but they pay us the same for all the hours. If they paid me better for all the extra time I work I would be able to save and take my children to a place they would like to go for a vacation but it is very difficult to do that, what I earn is not enough.

We are agricultural workers that when farmers need us we are there working their lands. We work hard alongside them in order to reap the harvest that feeds many of you and us. We are parents who love our children, we want to give them what is necessary. Ladies and gentlemen representatives, please help us so we are paid for the extra time we work.

Dear representatives, on behalf of Yolanda, I thank you for your attention and ask, do you agree to support the proposal to pay agricultural workers overtime pay?

Thank you,

Yolanda
Agricultural Worker
Marion County