

Testimony in favor of HB4002, farm worker overtime

Yamhill County Commissioner Casey Kulla

Thank you, chair, co-chair, members of the committee, and staff. I am a Yamhill County Commissioner and I've spent my career as a vegetable farmer on a river island in the Willamette. I stand here in support of HB 4002, *and* I ask that you consider amendments.

It is simple: the state of Oregon has a moral obligation to end the exemption on overtime. Exempting farmworkers from overtime pay has a racist history. Paying farm workers overtime is the right thing to do and should be ramped up as quickly as possible.

But at the same time, it can also be true that paying overtime will be difficult for farmers. And so, my two requests for you to consider: (1) extend the tax credit three more years and increase the % of the overtime that is eligible for the tax credit; (2) set up a fund at Business Oregon and administered by the ODA to help farmers invest in mechanization and value-added markets. Farmers often talk about being price-takers. I challenge you to help them become price-makers, with value-added investments by farmer coop formation.

Many farmers are on the edge, and an added regulation or imposition can be the thing that tips them out of farming. Please help farms weather this change, and please do not assume you know what will happen on any farm. We all operate between the wild weather and global markets. Do the right thing, by ending the farm exemption to overtime and raise the tax credit percentage and years, to help farms span that gap between the wild (and getting wilder) weather and the market.

Thank you for your time today, and thank you to the skilled and tenacious farm workers and farm operators who grow so much of what we eat.