

February 08, 2022

House Committee on Business and Labor  
State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Or 97301

Opposed HB 4002

Dear Chairman Holvey and Committee Members,

I am a very small producer and I don't employ a lot of outside labor. I have chosen to be a simple shepherd and not an economist which is my education and training. I can tell you that moving HB 4002 forward will have economic impacts to the agricultural industry and the labor force that they currently use.

When I speak with friends that are not involved in agriculture and live a different life than I do they think HB 4002 is fair and what the "poor disadvantage" workers want. Then we get into the what is fact and what is the mis-perceived part of the conversation and I want to have that conversation with you today:

- (1) The agricultural operations don't operate on eight (8) hour shifts five days a week. The fact is agriculture is a seasonality employer based upon the crops being raised from planting through harvesting. Example: if I told you that you can only buy certain food items or eat at a certain time of the day unless you paid more how would that impact your decision making and budget?
- (2) Agriculture in Oregon has had some tough years with the Covid pandemic, drought, ice storms, wind events, wildfires and smoke and the recent heat dome. Just trying to survive has been hard enough. If you as a governing body thought that Oregon's agriculture was strong, vibrant and robust than why was a special session called in December of 2021 to give a bail out to agriculture? An economic study will show how damaging HB 4022 will be to Oregon's agriculture due to the fragile state of agriculture today and the recovery needed. The study will also show which segments of agriculture will be hit the hardest and if ag-overtime will actually accomplish what the supporters of HB 4002 desire. It would be prudent for this body to take the time to get that information to have for decision making and not base a vote upon emotion or good well...we are doing the right thing for the workers and we don't believe that HB 4002 will have any real, long term impacts to agriculture in Oregon.
- (3) This debate isn't about wages to the ag workforce. I can't even hire someone for under \$20 an hour to clean pens during lambing. The labor demand market sets the wages. With the short supply of workers higher wages are paid and more hours are available for those that want to work them. I feel that this debate is about the labor force should only work eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. Everyone can choose to work where they want and do the type of work that they want. It is like you being a legislator. You have chosen to do this job. You get a fixed yearly salary of \$32,839 a year and \$151 per diem a day. You aren't paid overtime when you put in over an eight-hour day. When you are in session that is like being in harvest or doing seasonality work.
- (4) This has become an emotional topic in the agriculture community. First how do you as an employer explain to your employees what changes HB 4002 will do your operation's bottom line and how those changes will impact the labor force that you use. Then there is the stress for survival as an agricultural operation and how will you compete nationally and globally. What are the impacts to your family and livelihood?

Farmers are good people and we try to take care of our employees so they return and Oregon has some of the strongest laws for protecting farm workers. Most farmers that I know and myself work along our employees and put in even longer hours to keep our operations running smoothly. Please listen to the voices of agriculture and put this back into a workgroup for the 2023 session.

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth  
Simple Shepherd  
M.D. Acres  
Madras, Oregon