



Jefferson County Farm Bureau

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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,

Jefferson County Farm Bureau is opposed to this bill for many reasons. Last year in December during the special session both Oregon Legislative Chambers authorized for special agriculture funding to help with the drought, ice storm and heat dome that had major impacts on Oregon agriculture on top of what the Covid-19 pandemic had already done. We thank you for that, but a disconnect is very present with this body moving forward with HB 4002. Why would this body elect to help agriculture in December recognizing how fragile of a state we are in and then turn around in less than 90 days and decide to move forward with a bill that will put an end to Oregon's agriculture as you know it today? There is some perceived notion that those in agriculture that are farming don't really understand or know the impacts HB 4002 will have on our livelihoods and operations. We truly do understand what HB 4002 will do to us and our workforce and continuation of us farming. We may not be experts in the policy making arena but we do understand survival of our operations.

HB 4002 will have impacts that this body may not be able to undue once HB 4002 is law. Every agricultural operation is unique in the crops that they grow and labor requirements. It isn't like a factory producing widgets. You don't turn farming on and off in eight-hour shifts. Farming is a way of life with profit margins are unstable due to us being price takers and not price setters since we are competing in a global market place where labor costs are not the same. Oregon has some of the highest wages in the United States let alone worldwide. The labor force has been tight for several years. Moving to ag-overtime for seasonal jobs won't provide more workers. Ag overtime will force farmers to change their labor requirements. The options are limited: (1) change to lower labor crops (2) bring in more mechanical equipment to reduce labor (3) reduce wages and benefits if you can find more workers to meet the new law and keep the costs to fit the profit business model or (4) go out of business. Yes, agriculture is a business and to stay in business you need to cover your expenses vs your income.

One over-arching hidden impact when agriculture can't make it anymore is the push to develop the farmland and the climate impact when the green space is gone and made into houses and parking lots. When you have a resource that isn't profitable or sustainable then you look to change the use for survival.

Vice Chairman Rep. Bonham can tell you how fragile his district is, which we are a part of. We encourage you to just vote no on this bill during this session and send it back to a work group and get some studies from Oregon State University and Oregon Department of Agriculture so you truly look at the total long-term impacts to discuss for the long session in 2023.

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth

Mickey Killingsworth

Secretary-Treasurer
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Home of North Unit Irrigation District