



"The Voice of Oregon's Wheat Producers Since 1926"

OREGON WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE

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February 8, 2022

Chair Holvey
Vice Chair Bonham
Vice Chair Grayber
Members of the House Business and Labor Committee

RE: Oppose 4002 As Introduced

Chair Holvey and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4002, agriculture overtime. The Oregon Wheat Growers League is a nonprofit trade association representing the nearly 2,000 farms across Oregon producing wheat. Today, we submit testimony in opposition to HB 4002 as introduced and with the latest round of Committee amendments. We urge the legislature to pass an overtime policy that protects family farms from unaffordable cost increases and protects employees from lost hours and layoffs.

Our members actively manage their farmland to ensure it produces quality grain and sustains the health of the environment and soil. This work is labor-intensive, particularly during seasonal periods like planting and harvesting. Wheat producers rely on their employees to work alongside them to ensure crops get planted and harvested within the short timeframes dictated by nature and weather related OR-OSHA regulations.

For the last 12-months the agricultural industry has been clear about the unintended consequences of passing an inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate. It will send shockwaves through the entire agriculture industry in Oregon. Within the wheat industry we anticipate a reduction in employee hours in peak seasons and fluctuation in pay for salaried year-round employees. Additionally, our members frequently employ year-round employees who benefit from flexible work schedules during off-seasons in return for extra hours worked during peak seasons. A strict 40-hour overtime mandate will result in many of our farms no longer offering this unique benefit to employees. Further, we are concerned about the impacts of likely consolidation of some of our generational family farms to large corporations.

There is time to craft an agricultural overtime policy that works for everyone who depends on farm income.

We urge the legislature to seek a compromise similar to legislation successfully adopted by other states who recognized that agriculture is uniquely ill-suited for traditional overtime laws due to the seasonal nature of the industry. A policy that includes a peak seasonal accommodation would provide farmers the required flexibility for a successful planting and harvest and will result in more money in the pockets of workers.

The Oregon Wheat Growers League is counting on the legislature to come to the table and find a compromise this session – not allow BOLI to establish a 40-hour overtime mandate. There is a path forward and we remain committed to continuing to work with legislators to craft a unique Oregon agricultural overtime solution that preserves family farms and supports farmworkers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AHOEY', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Hoey
Chief Executive Officer