

Submitter: Connie Peterson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

My testimony in support of HB 4002 is personal and anecdotal, arising from my related experience and a deeply held belief that farmworkers are essential workers, as well as my understanding of the racist roots in the last century of their exclusion from overtime pay in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

I am now a senior citizen, raised in the Willamette Valley near Eugene. I was and am still fortunate in that my family of origin was white and solidly middle class. I am also fortunate to have had parents who thought there were important lessons their daughters needed to learn—including the value of hard work and the people who performed this work. Back when children were allowed to do so, my parent's insisted that my sister and I work in the fields during the summer. I picked beans for 2.5 cents per pound, taking the "bean bus" in the early morning and working quite long hours. My parents also wanted to us pick strawberries. I lasted two days before announcing that I would rather spend the summer "grounded" than perform this hot, sticky, miserable labor in the scorching sun threatened by bees. I learned a lot from this experience, and have always had a deep and abiding appreciation for the people who put produce on my table and do this hard work.

I strongly support HB4002 as an issue of basic equity and justice and in consideration of the health and wellbeing of farmworkers.

There are practical reasons for my urging passage as well. I understand that there is labor shortage in the agricultural sector. Overtime is paid in our neighboring States of California and Washington (Impacts feared by opposition in these states have not materialized!) Failure to pass this legislation in Oregon will exacerbate labor issues. The transition period and financial supports for farmers during this transition make passage of this legislation workable as well as the right thing to do. Unfinished business from the last legislative session, this legislation should be enacted.

Thank you for your service. Please pass HX 4002.

Connie Peterson