

Crook-Wheeler County Farm Bureau

498 SE Lynn Blvd.
Prineville, OR 97754

February 8, 2022

House Committee on Business and Labor
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Oppose HB 4002

Dear Chairman Holvey and Committee Members,

Crook-Wheeler County Farm Bureau is opposed to this bill for many reasons. HB 4002 will have impacts that this body may not be able to undo once it is enacted into law. Every agricultural operation is unique in the crops they grow and the labor requirements. The farming operation is not a 9 to 5 business that can be turned on and off. Farming is a way of life where we deal with small profit margins and are unable to set prices. We participate in a global market where labor costs are not the same. Oregon has some of the highest wages in the United States let alone the world. The labor work force has been tight for many 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) eliminate labor through technology and mechanical harvest, 3) reduce wages and benefits and find more workers to meet the new law and keep cost at a point to keep in business or 4) go out of business or move to a different state that values farmers.

We ask that you consider working with Farm Bureau to make this bill better for farmers and still address your concerns. We as a farming organization ask that you at the minimum consider seasonal work, livestock workers and the fact that this will be hurting seasonal employees that rely on the agriculture community for jobs with an expectation of the hours and earnings they have made in the past.

One over-arching hidden impact is when farmers can't make it anymore there will be a push to develop farmland, if farming families can't make a living it becomes unsustainable and they are put out of business. Then the farms will be developed into housing and parking lots, when the green space is gone how will that impact the climate.

Please vote no on HB 4002 and send it back to a work group. We believe there is a better solution and you are part of that solution.

Sincerely,

Tim Deboodt

Tim Deboodt, President
Crook-Wheeler County Farm Bureau