

Submitter: Mary Chamberlain

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

As an employee and a future owner of a 3rd generation dairy operation in Eastern Oregon, I strongly oppose House Bill 4002 otherwise known as AG OT. Our operation works based on our cows needs, not by the time on a clock. Though we strive to find the balance between working and time off, there are days and times of the year this is just not possible. Dairy operations, like ours, depend on not just livestock work, but also raising our own crops. When we interview employees we are very clear that there will be times of year you barely make 40hrs a week, and there will be times of year you will work over; particularly during silage season "long days". Our employees are not forced to work, but they do have the opportunity for more hours (and more pay) during these "long days". If AG OT goes through, those options of "long days" will be lost to employees at no added benefits to them. The extra costs of paying OT to any employee will be lost in favor of mechanical improvements to lessen the workday, or an addition of a new employee. Though we can't see how AG OT can be helpful to our fellow employees, we also realize that if this is a bill you are set on, a compromise MUST be made for livestock industries like dairy ! 55hour weeks (to allow for high calving days) , or seasonal overages (for example silage season) would give us flexibility. Honestly, at a hard 40hr week, we will have to install more mechanization to take the place of the employees we have. In an industry that is the ultimate "price taker", we don't get the option to demand more money for our products. Especially given our location near Idaho, where there is no AG OT. Milk processing is already done out of state, with our milk & dairy products, sold nationally and internationally. They have no cause to pay us more money for our products just because Oregon decides it needs to require AgOT pay. In 2015 our family operation ran the numbers on minimum wage increases, healthcare, and 401K...those numbers closed a parlor employing 5 people! (And built a robotic milking facility that employees 2). If this passes the results will be finding new homes for our calves, or putting in automatic feeders for them: a loss of another 5jobs. When labor is already your highest cost, adding more boundaries to labor requirements doesn't help workers- it displaces them. In our opinion: this is a "feel good bill", but not a "do good bill".