



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Holvey
Vice-Chairs Bonham and Grayber
Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor

FR: Graham Trainor, OR AFL-CIO President

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 4002, Farmworker Overtime

February 8, 2022

My name is Graham Trainor and I'm proud to serve as President of the Oregon AFL-CIO, the statewide federation of labor unions directly representing over 300,000 workers in Oregon and a voice for all workers in the legislative process. If the past two years have taught us anything, let it be that that work that goes unnoticed and is severely underappreciated is what we rely on most when our everyday lives are upended.

Without fail through this deadly global pandemic, Oregon's farmworkers have continued to tend Oregon's famous Christmas trees, picked world renowned hazelnuts and toiled in Oregon's grass fields. They've inhaled smoke through historic wildfire seasons and endured extreme cold - all while being paid less than every other "essential worker" in the state when working beyond 40 hours.

Overtime pay for farmworkers is not only an issue of basic fairness, but also a critical tool for our economy. Low-pay, lack of employer-provided health care, and long hours of physical labor in often dangerous conditions ultimately lead to higher risks of adverse health effects for farmworkers and their families. Overtime protections help ensure that workers are not economically forced into working more hours than is safe while also ultimately saving costs to our health care system and helping stimulate our economy long-term.

Oregon has been a national leader in worker protections since our inception. In 1887, Oregon was the first state in the union to recognize Labor Day, and since then we've continued to lead the country in reforms that help make Oregon a better place to be a worker. What happened between 1887 and now though, is that farmworkers were categorically excluded from overtime protections granted to almost every other worker because of their race. The labor movement was there in 1938, Congress was there, the Oregon legislature was here.

None of our institutions did enough to stop this racist injustice from occurring then, but we are here now. It would be negligent to continue to ignore the fact that farmworkers are disproportionately Latinx, and are already disproportionately impacted by structural racism within our broader economy. HB 4002 presents us an opportunity to say enough, this failed



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experiment of paying people less because of their race isn't the Oregon we wanted to inherit, and now, it's not the Oregon we'll allow the next generation of farmworkers to inherit either.

The Oregon Labor Movement stands shoulder to shoulder with Oregon's farmworkers in asking you to grant them equal protection under Oregon's overtime laws. This is a practical and moral imperative for Oregon at this pivotal moment in our history. Oregon's farmworkers are essential -- before, during, and after this pandemic -- and deserve to be afforded the same basic labor standards as every other class of Oregon workers. We urge your support of HB 4002 to proactively overturn this explicitly racist piece of Oregon's statute.