

Submitter: Connie Peterson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

My testimony in support of HB 4002 is informed by personal experience and a deeply held belief that farmworkers are essential workers, as well as my understanding of, and dismay about, the racist history that led to this category of worker's exclusion from overtime pay in the Fair Labor Standards Act --passed in the last century.

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 parents 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 expected 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. It addresses issues of basic equity and justice and would promote the health and wellbeing of farmworkers and their families.

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 shortages.

The transition period and financial supports for farmers impacted by the need to provide overtime pay 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 HB 4002.

Connie Peterson