

Submitter: Jon Iverson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor

Measure: HB4002

Chair Holvey and members of the committee

My name is Jon Iverson and I am a third generation family farmer from Woodburn Oregon. We farm about 1,200 acres of grass seed, cover crop seed, tulips, hemp and grapes.

I am writing to urge a no vote HB 4002. Or at least make an amendment to give a critical time exemption for harvest or planting windows that are critical to a farms operation.

I believe this bill is well intentioned, I believe all people are important and need to be treated with dignity. I believe everyone needs to be able to make a decent living and be treated with respect by their employer, regardless of what industry they are involved with. Several of the stories from farm workers broke my heart and if these atrocities were happening BOll needed to be contacted, these weren't issues overtime would fix, many were blatant workplace violations that should have been met with the full force of the law. While I believe the intent of this bill is to increase the wages of farm workers, I'm afraid it will have the opposite effect.

If this bill passes as written, I believe, and I know this will happen on our farm, farm workers will be limited to 40 hours. I know many propionates want this but this will hurt several of my employees that ask to work extra hours in the summer. We have greatly changed our crop mix in the last decade because of unchanging crop prices and increasing costs. We used to grow primary food crops, process vegetables and potatoes, we have changed to less labor crops mainly to decrease the workforce we employ. This was not an easy decision we know may families depended on us for employment and it was very difficult to let people go. Most of our remaining employees have been with us for more than a decade at least.

We provide our employees with a matching 401K, access to medical insurance group plan that we will pay half of (many do not use it because they have better access through the State). We also give bonuses at the end of the year. Our employees were loyal to us through tough years and when we finally had a good year we tried to reward there loyalty the best we could. Our employees are very important to us. During the heat dome and the wildfire smoke we asked our employees to stay home, even though I and family members still came to work. Our employee's safety is very important to us. Even though our crop mix has changed we have tried to provide year round employment for our team, so they don't have to hunt for winter work for less pay in the winter. We let our employees pick the hours they want to work, in the summer most employees choose to work between 40 and 50 hours but several ask to work more in the summer as for them it is a great time to pad their budget. Most of our employees are making 5 dollars over minimum wage, but a wage jump from \$18/hour to \$27/hour is something we could not afford.

Agriculture is different than many industries, our crops are on a tight timeline for harvest and planting. You might have a day or two to pick a blueberry before it goes bad. A shoe in a factory doesn't decay and cause the loss of a years investment if it is produced a week later. Holiday retail was compared to agriculture. Most retail is owned by large corporations with huge profits that can raise their prices, agriculture is not like this. A harvest season exemption from this rule would recognize the special circumstances agriculture is in while limiting excessive hours in off times. It would also allow those employees that want to work more hours to do so without having to look for a second job when their hours are held at 40.

Thank you for reading my testimony and I urge you to vote no on HB 4002 as written or amend it to include a special critical need exemption for harvest or planting.

Jon Iverson