

Submitter: Rodney Cheyne
On Behalf Of: Rodney Cheyne Farms
Committee: House Committee On Business and Labor
Measure: HB4002

To House Committee on Business and Labor
No on HB4002

My Name Is Rodney Cheyne I farm in Klamath County. I grow wheat, Alfalfa, grass, cattle, oats, barley, grass seed and employ 1 individual. These are people I care about and I do everything I can to compensate my employees fairly.

I am concerned about the impact that ag overtime would have on my farm and employees.

As a wheat farmer, I cannot increase the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global commodity market set our prices. Since I cannot pass on increased costs, I will be forced to limit the number of hours that employees work to 40 hours per week to avoid the added expense of overtime pay. The other unintended consequences of this legislation for employees will be simply be terminating the position. This bill along with the water shortages, of the Klamath Basin I cannot afford another cost increase, along with the astronomical fuel and fertilizer prices and inflation. I am barely hanging on to a 5th generation farm here! I do not want to do this, but that is the practical reality. As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-after-year. Mandating overtime after 40-hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture and will result in reduced pay and opportunities for farm employees, Agriculture demands different hours than the traditional 8-5.

I actively manage my farmland to ensure it produces quality products and sustains the health of the environment and soil. This work can be labor-intensive, particularly during seasonal periods like planting and harvesting. This bill will likely cost me thousands in new labor costs that I can't afford.

Farmers have been clear about the consequences of this policy, but I'm also worried that farm employees will see their paychecks reduced or jobs cut if overtime pay is required after 40-hours.

Only seven states have adopted ag overtime policies, and most have crafted policies to ensure some measure of flexibility to ensure that local farms can remain viable and that employees' jobs and paychecks are protected. Several states have adopted policies to meet seasonal needs and others established higher overtime thresholds that help avoid some of the worst consequences. Failure to provide flexibility that acknowledges the needs for agricultural production risks the sustainability of thousands of family farms, ranches, and crop production and places farmworkers at a disadvantage, having the opposite effect of what is intended.

As someone who stands to lose their family business, I urge you to oppose HB 4002 as written which would create an inflexible 40-hour overtime mandate that simply won't work for Oregon's farms.

Thank You for your consideration!